

Hafa Adai!

DOC: Island Areas Census is 100% paper-based. **PAGE 2**

Tax filing deadline extended to July. **PAGE 3**

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No more international flights starting tomorrow, Thursday

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Skymark Airlines Inc.'s last flights between Saipan and Japan will be



King-Hinds

today, Wednesday, temporarily closing the CNMI's door to international flights.

Commonwealth Ports Authority board chair Kimberlyn
See FLIGHTS on Page 4

Private schools consider transition to online

By **KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA**
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REPORTER

Private schools are preparing to take their classes online to keep children and faculty

safe in the event the CNMI experiences a COVID-19 outbreak.

In an interview with Galvin Deleon Guerrero, representative of private schools

on the Board of Education and Mount Carmel School president, he said he and his team are discussing options on how to continue classes
See PRIVATE on Page 4

'We are in a real bad situation'

By **BEA CABRERA**
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CORRESPONDENT

Late January this year, our side of the world learned about a new viral threat called the novel coronavirus. Two months later, QQ Car Rental president James Han finds himself closing his businesses one after the other—a restaurant, hotel, and a car rental company.

"We are in a real bad situation."
See BAD on Page 4

Businessman James Han had to temporarily close his businesses one after the other—a restaurant, a hotel, and a car rental—when the economy started to go downhill due to the suspension of tourist arrivals caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

BEA CABRERA



CPA-CUC talks to reactivate power plant gets go-ahead

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Au-

thority board's Airport Facilities Committee has authorized CPA executive director Christopher S. Tenorio to sit down

with Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Gary P. Camacho to start negotiating on CUC's plan to reacti-

vate Power Plant 3, which is located in CPA's property in Isley Field.

CPA board's Airport Facili-

ties Committee chair Barrie C. Toves said yesterday that if his committee approves the draft agreement with CUC, then the panel will recommend it to the full board for adoption.

At a recent Airport Facilities Committee meeting, Tenorio said the CPA management's position right now is to ask the board if they can start negoti-

See CPA-CUC on Page 4

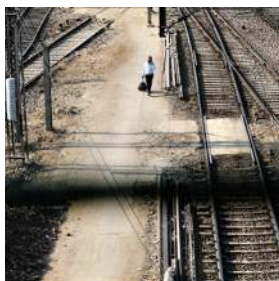
INSIDE



BUSINESS

Tom Yum Restaurant, Saipan's favorite Thai and American food place, now has an online service.

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ASIA

As India expanded its virus-containment measures and halted its train network.

PAGE 15



FOCUS

Testing blunders crippled the United States' response as COVID-19 spread, according to AP.

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GOT A NEWS TIP?

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Local

'IGNORE ONLINE CENSUS INVITATION'

DOC: Island Areas Census is 100% paper-based

By IVA MAURIN
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REPORTER

The CNMI Department of Commerce is alerting everyone in the community to disregard any online census invitation.

Social media platforms have been alerting its users to make sure they are counted in the 2020 Census by filling up a short questionnaire online,

which CNMI residents should disregard.

"The 2020 Island Areas Censuses will be 100% paper-based and led by Census takers. Census takers will be conducting in-person interviews and not online," said the department yesterday. "If you live in the CNMI, American Samoa, Guam, or the U.S. Virgin Islands, you will not complete the 2020 Census online

or over the phone."

Following Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' Executive Order 2020-04, which placed the CNMI under a state of public health emergency for COVID-19, and effecting a two-week government shutdown, all 2020 CNMI Census operations are on hold until further notice.

Similarly, the Department of Commerce also warns everyone of a 2020 Census Scam

alert instructing residents to go online and complete the 2020 census to obtain COVID-19 stimulus funds.

"The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands may occasionally receive 2020 Census stateside advertising on national television, radio and social media. However, the 2020 Island Areas Cen-

suses is 100% paper-based with census workers conducting in-person interviews," the department stated.

In the CNMI, before the temporary halt in operations, Census has begun conducting house-to-house in March, with enumerators conducting in-person interviews that take an average of 45 minutes to complete.

"The Census Bureau uses a long-form census to meet the

Island Areas data needs for detailed social, housing, and economic information," the department stated.

A census of the population is conducted every 10 years, per the U.S. Constitution. Census statistics are critical as it informs how billions of dollars of federal funds will be allocated by state, local, and federal lawmakers every year for the next 10 years.

Propst: Stores are essential

By IVA MAURIN
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REPORTER

Responding to the new business-hours directive, House minority leader Rep. Edwin K. Propst (Ind-Saipan), via livestream, urged Gov. Ralph DLG Torres to amend his Second Amended Executive Order 2020-04 and allow stores to operate beyond the prescribed 6am-1pm, which are the new base oper-



Propst

ating hours set for businesses.

"For the sake of our community, please amend your EO to allow stores to operate beyond 6am and 1pm. Stores are essential to the community, unlike poker parlors," Propst said.

By reducing the hours for stores to operate, they will be more crowded and congested, he said, which is likely to be more detrimental to the health

See PROPST on Page 4

Carter orders additional testing of As Terlaje tank water sample

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

U.S. District Court for the NMI designated Judge David O. Carter has ordered an additional testing of water samples from the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s As Terlaje tank to monitor concentration levels of chemicals that may contaminate CUC's drinking water and pose a threat to public health.

According to the minutes of court chamber proceeding Monday, Carter ordered one more test to be conducted in mid-to-late June so he will receive test results on or before July 8.

Carter said CUC informed him that it drew water samples from the As Terlaje tank last Feb. 4. He said the samples were shipped to California for testing and were received last Feb. 7. Carter received the results last Feb. 20.

CUC's laboratory manager Heidi Yelin got the results on that same day, Feb. 20.

Assistant attorney general Jose Mafnas Jr., counsel for CUC, informed Carter and Attorney General Edward Manibusan that the final results tested that perfluorooctaine sulfonates was at 25 parts per trillion and that perfluorooctanoic acid was a non-defect.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's health advisory level is 70 parts per

trillion in a water system.

The concentrated water samples were delivered to As Terlaje tank from the Isley wells after two wells were shut off.

CUC's drinking water and waste water division manager Randy Blackcloud described the test results as "encouraging."

Last Jan. 31, CUC executive director Gary P. Camacho told Carter that CUC shut down two contaminated wells a day before, Jan. 30, after Carter advised to go through all water wells on Saipan and determine which are to be taken off-line due to contamination.

U.S. public health officer Travis Spaeth stated in his report that "contaminants still exceed the health advisory level in the identified water wells."

Last Jan. 8, CUC issued a health advisory that it had detected levels of two contaminants—PFOs and PFOA—that exceeded EPA's health advisory level of 70 parts per trillion in a water system.

CUC identified the affected areas as Chalan Laulau, Iliying, Chalan Kiya, As Terlaje, Kannat Tabla, Fina Sisul, Oleai, and parts of southern Garapan, Gualo Rai, Susupe, As Lito, and As Perdido. As Terlaje tank provides water supply to these areas.



Carter

Division of Coastal Resources Management

SUMMER INTERNSHIP

WE ARE LOOKING FOR 15 CNMI-BASED COLLEGE STUDENTS, OR COLLEGE-BOUND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WITH AN INTEREST IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT CORAL REEF AND COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT. OUR SUMMER INTERNS WORK 20 HOURS A WEEK FOR 10 WEEKS FROM JUNE TO AUGUST AND ARE PAID \$10.00 PER HOUR.

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- » WATERSHED MANAGEMENT
- » WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

TO BE CONSIDERED, PLEASE SUBMIT ALL OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS BY APRIL 3, 2020 TO THE DCRM OFFICE IN MIDDLE ROAD, GUALO RAI OR BY EMAIL TO MALLORY MUÑA AT MMUNA@DCRM.GOV.MP OR COLLEEN FLORES AT CFLORES@DCRM.GOV.MP

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Tax filing deadline extended to July

The income tax return filing and payment deadline of April 15, 2020, is extended to July 15, 2020. This relief includes estimated tax payments for tax year 2019 that are due on April 15, 2020.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, through the Department of Finance, Division of Revenue & Taxation, announced the special relief to individuals and businesses yesterday in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

This relief only applies to income tax forms 1040-CM, 1040-NMI, 1040-NR, 1120-CM, 1120-F, 1120-S, and 1065-CM.

"This relief is intended to assist everyone during this challenging time. In collaboration with the White House and the U.S. Treasury, we coordinated on extending the tax filing deadline to give families the peace of mind and to continue our social distancing policies. Lt. Gov. [Arnold I.] Palacios and I thank Secretary of Finance David Atalig, Revenue and Tax director Tracy Norita, and their staff," said Torres.

"This policy comes at a much-needed time, and the Department of Finance has

been hard at work managing our revenues and ensuring protections for all taxpayers struggling with the economic downturn as a result of COVID-19. I appreciate our hard-working DRT employees and director Tracy Norita for the work they are doing. We will provide additional updates moving forward," said Atalig.

The Department of Finance reminds individual taxpayers that everyone is eligible to request a six-month extension to file their return by filing IRS Form 4868.

This payment relief includes:

■ **Individuals:** Income tax filing and payment deadlines for individual returns, with a due date of April 15, 2020, are being automatically extended until July 15, 2020. This payment relief applies to all individual returns, including self-employed individuals, and all entities other than C-Corporations, such as trusts or estates. DRT will automatically provide this relief to taxpayers. Taxpayers do not need to file any additional forms or call DRT to qualify for this relief.

■ **Corporations:** For C corporations, income tax filing and payment deadlines are being automatically extended until July 15, 2020.

Taxpayers who anticipate a child tax refund are urged to file as quickly as possible to begin processing returns.

Penalties and interest will begin to accrue on any remaining unpaid balances as of July 16, 2020. To assist taxpayers in social distancing efforts, the Division of Revenue & Taxation is providing a tax return dropbox at the entrance of the office for easy and fast submission of tax forms.

The deadlines for filing and payment of monthly and quarterly tax returns remain the same.

The Department of Finance reminds taxpayers that cashiers remain open during government office closures to accept tax filings and payments.

Taxpayers are encouraged to visit the Department of Finance website at www.dof.gov.mp/forms to access digital versions of the required tax forms. If you have any questions or concerns, you may send an email to info@dof.gov.mp and a response will be sent as soon as possible. (PR)



Atalig

U P D A T E

WIC POP UP CLINIC

Please be advised that the WIC Pop Up Clinic appointments, scheduled for **March 25, 26, & 27, 2020**, previously arranged to be held at the Koblerville Youth Center, will be conducted at the WIC Clinic located at Upper Navy Hill.

You are important to us and we apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Please call us at (670) 664-4084 should you have any questions.

WIC provides healthy food, nutrition education, and breastfeeding guidance to more than 3,000 moms and children in the CNMI. If you are pregnant, a caregiver, or a mom with children under 5, you can get the right personalized support for you and your family.



*This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This project was supported by Grant 7NM700NM5 CFDA 10.557 from USDA and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC). The contents above are solely the responsibility of CHCC and do not necessarily represent the official views of USDA.



We will be Closed for Inventory March 25th through the 28th

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3 more test positive for COVID-19 in Guam

Three more people tested positive for the novel coronavirus yesterday in Guam, according to the release of the Joint Information Center – Guam last night, bringing to 32 the total number of positive cases in the U.S. territory.

The JIC advisory said that the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services tested 38 individuals for COVID-19 yesterday, March 24, 2020, and that 35 tested negative for the virus, officially called SARS-CoV-2.

So far, Guam has tested a total of 233 from March 12, 2020, through March 24, 2020. To date, a total of 32 cases tested positive and 201 cases tested negative for COVID-19 with one death. All 31 remaining confirmed cases are in isolation.

Profiles of earlier confirmed cases

BAD

From Page 1

ation. ...Ninety-nine percent of my business is down. ...I closed the restaurant in February because most people do not go out to eat anymore, then my hotel, because direct bookings were gone due to cancellations, and now my car rental business,” he told *Saipan Tribune*.

He assured that the cars in his rental business are well-maintained, in good condition, and he is trying to sell half of his fleet. “However, even at low prices, no one will buy because it is not a good time to spend money. I had to lay off half of my employees and now they are without jobs,” he added.

He sees these closures as temporary in nature, that the tourism sector will eventually recover. But his is not the only one closing a business temporarily. Based on the Saipan Chamber of Commerce list last week, over 20 local businesses are shutting doors temporarily. Last Monday one of the CNMI’s main hotels and a big draw of tourists from South Korea—Saipan World Resort in Susupe—also announced its temporary closure.

In a statement to media, Saipan World Resort said that the closure was effective immediately and the hotel will not be operational until

Most of Guam COVID-19 known positive cases have epidemiological links to other confirmed cases. Profiles of the previous 29 confirmed cases, not including confirmed cases from yesterday:

STATUS:

- 21 in stable condition
- 5 hospitalized
- 1 deceased

GENDER:

- 12 males
- 17 females

RESIDENTIAL LOCATION:

- 7 from the north
- 14 from central
- 7 from the south
- 1 still under investigation for place of residence

TRAVEL HISTORY:

the end of April 2020. It cited the CNMI’s efforts to mitigate the ongoing coronavirus outbreak and promote social distancing as the reason for the temporary closure.

Also, effective yesterday, Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan in Garapan will close its restaurants—the World Café, Mai Teppanyaki, and Tasty Burgers at the Paseo de Marianas—on concerns surrounding the safety of its staff, guests, and the community.

Meanwhile, the Aqua Resort Club in San Roque has temporarily suspended all dine-in operations at their restaurants—Costa Terrace, Kevin’s Prime Rib & Seafood Restaurant, Vino Bar, and limited hours at Michelle’s but are accommodating take-out orders from their ala carte menu.

Monday afternoon, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres amended his executive to limit business operations in the CNMI starting today. “Circumstances have changed, necessitating amendments to the executive order. COVID-19 is spreading on Guam, our island neighbor. Further, discussions with the Commonwealth Health Care Corp. indicate that, given the CNMI’s limited resources, prevention and containment of COVID-19 in the CNMI is an absolute necessity,” Torres directive stated.

One provision limits all businesses that have facilities open to the public

this conversation since mid-January as they tracked what was happening in China.

“It was difficult at that time for everyone to wrap our minds around what we anticipated to be an inevitable economic shutdown to keep the community safe,” she said.

King-Hinds said they knew they had to do it and they sought the authority to shut down the borders but that, time and time again, they were told that they didn’t have the authority.

On the other hand, she said, they had to juggle the need to close with many in the tourism industry begging them to prolong the inevitable because they too have obligations and that is to keep people employed.

King-Hinds said that CPA is grateful for the cooperation and collaborative efforts of the industry partners who stepped up to the plate to imple-

AT A GLANCE

GUAM	
Tested:	233
Negative:	201
Positive:	32
Deaths:	1

CNMI	
Tested:	5
Negative:	5
Positive:	0
Deaths:	0

Source: Joint Information Center–Guam, Commonwealth Health Care Corp.

to operate these premises only from 6am to 1pm.

Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Velma Palacios said all businesses, large or small, will be impacted. “Take for example in the CNMI, the hotels, T-Galleria, airlines most have to close down or reduce their operations, which affects employees and not one business is going to thrive. Everyone is trying to see how they can balance both health and safety with surviving in this economy,” she said.

“I encourage the community not to panic. ...Things are unfolding every day. ...Stay informed from the right sources such as the COVID-19 Task Force. Follow the directives provided by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] and [Commonwealth Health Care Corp.]—wash your hands, stay home if you are sick, if you need to be outside practice social distancing, and take care of yourself and your family. ...Meanwhile, the SCC will keep members and non-members informed,” she added.

For someone like Han who has to close down three businesses, one after the other in just a matter of days, he said that businesses to hit bottom in this economy is nearly inevitable. “We are hopeful that the government will help businesses and, for our part, we will try help as well. All of us want to survive,” he said.

ment health screening measures at the border to help detect and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“But even with that, the science and the data are telling us that the best way to beat this is by staying home and I’m glad that the whole world is waking up to the fact that we all need to stay home and stop traveling for everyone’s sake,” King-Hinds added.

She said she’s sad about Skymark as everyone, most especially the governor, worked to hard to open up that air bridge between Japan and the CNMI. That was not easy, she said, which makes this situation more heartbreaking.

“Unfortunately, these are things beyond anyone’s control and not specific to just the CNMI. We have to be all in this together. We all have stay strong and step up to the plate for one another,” she said.

- 1 - Japan
- 5 - Philippines
- 1 - U.S. mainland

- 2 are in their 80s
- 11 are in their 60s
- 4 are in their 50s
- 5 are in their 40s
- 3 are in their 30s
- 3 are in their 20s (PR)

AGE GROUPS:

- 1 is in their 90s

CPA-CUC

From Page 1

ating with CUC on Power Plant 3.

Tenorio said the power plant is going to benefit CPA not only for backup to its power generators but also for water supply when there is power outage.

CUC is trying to reactivate Power Plant 3 for use during emergencies or disasters. The plant was deactivated in 2002.

Tenorio said they just recently had a power outage and the airport was on a generator for five days. Tenorio

said during the last day, there was only one generator working.

Board director Pete Reyes asked if there is any assurance by CUC that when CPA turns over the property, that CUC is going to support the power operation of the airport. Tenorio said they want to make sure that they put it in the agreement.

Toves said it’s the management’s intention to request the committee to place this matter on the board for adoption to authorize the negotiation to start.

Board vice chair Roman Tudela then moved to authorize Tenorio to start negotiating with Camacho and CUC.

PRIVATE

From Page 1

come March 30.

“There are some schools that are sticking to their commitment to reopen on March 30. Others have already begun conducting online classes” he said.

Deleon Guerrero said that he has set to meet with MCS officials to discuss the resumption of face-to-face classes on March 30.

Some schools are considering a hybrid system, Deleon Guerrero said, which means some classes will be online and some will be in person while also observing social distancing.

Green Meadow School’s online classes started on Monday, while Saipan Community School has been conducting distance learning since last week.

Last Monday, MCS teachers started undergoing training for the online class transition in the event online classes is the route MCS decides to take.

“We are walking all our teachers through the four digital tools that we will be using to make sure that they know them well. Many of our

teachers use many different digital resources. But we want to have a standardized set of tools that we are going to use with all our students so that parents can follow along,” he said. Among the tools that MCS will use are Edmodo, Zoom, Khan Academy, and Achieve3000.

Majority of MCS teachers have already been certified by the Education Technology Program, Deleon Guerrero said.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, the Public School System will implement online classes come April 1 as part of precautionary measures to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 and promote social distancing in the CNMI.

Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred Ada said classroom instruction will be moved online for the remainder of the school year as part of PSS’ efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in campuses.

All schools will remain closed until the COVID-19 threat dies down.

The CNMI PSS Distance Education Program was established nearly 10 years ago. PSS is the first in the Pacific region to develop a curriculum-based online classroom learning.

PROPST

From Page 2

and safety of store employees and shoppers.

“If we are trying to prevent coronavirus through social distancing, the worst thing that you could possibly do is to cram in all the hours of shopping into a very small limited time,” he said. “If you do this, you are actually going to endanger the cashiers, the stockers, the people working in the stores, you’re also going to endanger the lives of those who are shopping. The logic is deeply flawed and illogical.”

Propst stressed that stores are essential, and that they have to be protected. He also highlighted that safety guidelines must be ensured when shopping and that social distancing must be observed in stores.

The reduction of the business hours—when facilities can open to the public and took effect yesterday—is part of the COVID-19 preventative measures being set by the

CNMI government, following the growing number of positive COVID-19 cases in Guam.

Further, when open to the public, businesses are encouraged to follow the recommended at least 6 feet social distancing practice, among other safety measures.

In support of the new directive, businesses have been posting their new adjusted hours and services via social media, also informing their customers of any off-site services past the 6am to 1pm hours.

Joeten, for one, released that all its stores, including Aiko’s Deli, will operate from 8am to 1pm, with *man’amko* shopping hours from 7am to 8am at their stores in Susupe, Garapan, and Dandan.

A laundry shop, Wash & Wear Washland, announced that they are open for walk-ins from 6am to 1pm, and drop-off until 3pm.

The governor earlier said that decreasing the points of interaction and contact between people would aid in the prevention and containment of COVID-19 in the CNMI.

FLIGHTS

From Page 1

King-Hinds said there were only two passengers in Skymark’s inbound flight yesterday.

This will leave only United Airlines doing flights between Saipan and Guam and only in the morning four days a week, King-Hinds said.

Separately, Skymark International Flight Operation Office manager John Furuya said yesterday that, due to coronavirus outbreak situation, they are temporarily suspending the Saipan-Narita, Narita-Saipan operation starting tomorrow, Thursday, and until May 10, 2020.

King-Hinds said that Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, CPA, the Commonwealth Health Care Corp., and the Marianas Visitors Authority have had

'COVID-19 relief should be regardless of immigration status, citizenship'

By IVA MAURIN
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REPORTER

Relief for laid-off workers must be equal regardless of citizenship and immigration status, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP).

As Congress, with the

PSS complaint yet to be served on Torres

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

As of yesterday, the lawyer of the Public School System and its commissioner, Dr. Alfred Ada, have yet to file proof of service that Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres and Finance Secretary David Atalig have been served with their complaint over an annual PSS budget issue, *Saipan Tribune* learned.

A source disclosed that Ada and PSS, through counsel Tiberius Mocanu, filed the complaint for injunction last March 12, but they have not served Torres and Atalig with court papers yet.

The source said a case cannot technically start until the defendant is served. The source said if a party is not served properly, then the party is not required to answer or show up in court.

At this time, the Superior

White House, prepare for a third relief bill following the continued spread of the novel coronavirus in the United States, Sablan says that relief afforded to American laid-off workers should also be given to non-U.S. citizens.

In a letter to U.S. House

Court has not granted a temporary restraining order in connection with the lawsuit.

Last Thursday, Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho set a status conference for the lawsuit on April 14 at the Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe. Camacho ordered the parties to come prepared to discuss briefing deadlines and hearing dates.

Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja re-assigned the case to Camacho after Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio recused herself, saying she is close family friends with the teacher representative on the Board of Education.

PSS and Ada are suing Torres and Atalig to guarantee for PSS an annual budget of not less than 25% of the Commonwealth's general revenue. Ada and PSS accuse Torres and Atalig of violating the NMI Constitution.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Sablan proposed for direct cash payments to laid-off workers, stating that this is the most certain and swift measure to maintain household liquidity.

The delegate explained that since there are no unemployment insurance systems in the Pacific U.S. insular areas, the provisions stipulated in the Family First Coronavirus Response Act that help laid-off workers through state unemployment programs is not going to be effective in the Marianas.

Sablan also stated that while the Marianas Department of Labor is experienced with administering Disaster Unemployment Assistance and Dislocated Worker Activities grants to aid workers laid off after a natural disaster, direct cash payments would be more immediately effective.

"Because half the Marianas labor force is non-U.S. citizen, to be fully effective, any relief provided to laid-off workers must be equally available regardless of immigration status or citizenship," the delegate stated. "Additionally, the acceptance and use of COVID 19-related assistance by non-U.S. citizens should not be a negative factor in subsequent applications for immigration benefits."

In February, a "public

charge" rule took effect, which establishes a test to determine whether an immigrant wanting to extend a visa or convert status into green card is likely to be a public charge. U.S. President Donald J. Trump argued that benefits of American citizens need to be protected, therefore immigrants should be financially self-sufficient.

"My overriding concern is that the sometimes unique circumstances of the North-

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ern Mariana Islands and other U.S. insular areas be fully incorporated in any action taken by the House. Everyone in the insular areas should receive aid equivalent to that provided nationwide," Sablan stated.

In his e-newsletter, the delegate reiterated that direct pay-

ments from the federal government to individuals in America are critical to make up for lost income, as businesses close and lay off workers.

"People need money in their pockets—for the sake of the economy and to take care of their families," he said.

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Effective March 24, 2020, in accordance with Governor Ralph DLG Torres' Executive Order 2020-04, the Saipan Tribube office will accommodate walk-in customers only from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

For any inquiries after 1:00 p.m., we can assist you via telephone,
call 235-2440 / 235-8747 or e-mail:
beth_delrosario@saipantribune.com
donna_rivera@saipantribune.com
alyssa_velasco@saipantribune.com

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Police release video, photo of attempted robbery

The CNMI Department of Public Safety released yesterday frame grabs from a surveillance camera and a video in a bid to identify the suspect in an attempted robbery at a poker arcade in San Jose, Saipan.

According to a DPS press release, DPS received a 911 call reporting an injured person at a poker establishment in the village of San Jose last Sunday, March 22, 2020, at about 6:51am.

At about 6:54am, police

arrived on scene and noticed a woman lying on the floor of the cashier booth, moaning in pain. When the officers asked her as to what had happened, the victim was unable to answer as she was in severe pain. The victim was transported to the Commonwealth Health Center where she was admitted.

Witnesses at the scene told police that a masked individual had tried gain access into the cashier's booth and has fled south toward Oleai.

After further investigation, police were told that the suspect mentioned to the cashier that he needed to "cash out." Shortly after the victim left the cashiers booth, she blacked out before police arrived on scene.

The suspect is described as 5'6" or 5'7" tall, dark-complexioned, skinny, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt, a pair of tan-colored cargo shorts, black baseball cap, and a pair of black shoes.

If you or someone you

know has any information relating to this crime, call 911 immediately. If you wish to remain anonymous, call the CNMI Crime Stoppers hotline at 234-7272. Crime Stoppers pays up to \$1,000 or any information leading to an arrest. **(PR)**

This frame grabs from a surveillance camera shows the suspect in an attempted robbery at a poker arcade in San Jose, Saipan.

DPS



CHCC expands availability of COVID-19 info

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Health Care Corp. has expanded ways for the CNMI to learn more about COVID-19 and more information for people who are diagnosed with other illnesses and pregnant women.

CHCC has provided a link for concerned citizens who have more questions about COVID-19, <http://bit.ly/who-covid19-whatsapp>. The link will send the viewer to a WhatsApp page that will allow the user to ask the World Health Organization directly. The service will provide the latest information and guidance from WHO on COVID-19 that was first reported last Dec. 31.

The CHCC website itself has a dedicated page for information about COVID-19, <https://chcc.gov.mp/coronavi>

rusinformation.php.

Separately, CHCC's Facebook statement stated that there is no specific information about the risk of COVID-19 with people who are diagnosed with human immunodeficiency viruses. The risk from immune suppression is not known, but with other viral respiratory infections, the risk for people with HIV getting severely ill is greatest in:

- People with a low CD4 cell count

- People not on an HIV treatment (antiretroviral therapy or ART)

- People with HIV can also be at increased risk of getting risk of getting ill with COVID-19 based on age and other medical conditions.

People diagnosed with HIV can protect themselves by monitoring for symptoms like coughing, sneezing, dif-

ficulty breathing, and seeking medical attention if you need it. Also visit the COVID-19 Health Tent at the Commonwealth Health Center's main entrance. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

WHO has also shared that women with COVID-19 can breastfeed if they feel comfortable with it. It's highly suggested that should a woman breastfeed, they must practice respiratory hygiene and wear a mask, wash hands before and after touching the baby, and routinely clean and disinfect surfaces.

Women who are pregnant can protect themselves against the virus by social distancing, avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth, cough or sneeze into a bent elbow or tissue and wash

hands frequently.

Health care services update:

- Immunization Clinic, for vaccinations, visit CHCC Family Care Clinic.

- Tuberculosis/Hansen's Prevention Program, patients of TB Program will be contacted by program staff for more information.

- HIV/STD Prevention Program, patients of HIV/STD Program will be contacted by program staff for more information.

- Breast & Cervical Screening Program and Nicotine Cessation Program is temporarily unavailable. The CHCC Women's Clinic, Family Care Clinic, and Children's Clinic are still open. All patients must be screened before entering CHCC.

For more info, contact the COVID-19 Info line at 285-1352/1542/1672/1854 or call the Mental HealthCare line 285-1856/1857.

CNMI gets \$366.9K for PPEs, supplies for first responders

Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres announced yesterday that the Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Douglas W. Domenech has awarded the CNMI a total of \$366,900 through the Office of Insular Affairs' Technical Assistance Program for personal protective equipment and hygienic supplies for government first responders to prevent the outbreak of COVID-19 in the CNMI.

"During times of disaster and crisis, our partnership with Assistant Secretary Doug Domenech and OIA has assisted in our emergency response efforts. This award will go a long way in pro-

tecting our first responders and government employees from potential exposure while serving our community," said Torres. "Lt. Gov. [Arnold I.] Palacios and I thank them and their staff for accepting our request and assisting us during this challenging time for our islands and the world."

In addition to other federal assistance, OIA will be coordinating with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Federal Emergency Management Agency on streamlining federal aid for the governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CNMI efforts. **(PR)**

Park denies dissuading witness from testifying for Mayor Atalig's defense

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Federal Bureau of Investigation special agent Haejun Park has denied the allegations made by Rota Mayor Efraim M. Atalig and his girlfriend, Evelyn Atalig, that he tried to dissuade Dr. Gregory Vecchi, a former special agent with the Office of the Inspector General, from testifying on behalf of the Ataligs' defense in the case.

In his declaration filed last week before the U.S. District Court for the NMI, Park also stated he made no reference as to the strength of the U.S. government's case against Efraim Atalig.

"The telephone call was professional in nature with no intent to discourage Vecchi from testifying on behalf of the defense," he said.

Park issued the declaration in support of the U.S. government's opposition to the Ataligs' motion to sanctions him for misconduct.

In their motion to impose sanctions, Efraim Atalig and

Evelyn Atalig, through their counsels, David G. Banes and Steven P. Pixley, said Park committed witness tampering.

Banes and Pixley said that the Ataligs filed a joint motion last March 6, to add Vecchi as an expert witness on interviewing techniques and reporting involved in a criminal investigation.

Two days later or on March 8, Vecchi received a call from Park, Banes and Pixley said. They said Park started the conversation by reminding Vecchi that they served abroad years ago and talked about their previous assignments together before revealing that he was the case agent in this case.

The lawyers said Park gave Vecchi the impression that the prosecution had a strong case and made negative remarks about the defense investigator, who is a former FBI special agent.

But in his declaration, Park said that, last March 8 after being made aware of the Ataligs' motion to add Vecchi as an expert witness, he called Vecchi on the phone to inquire about

what the latter maybe testifying as an expert witness for the defense.

Park said that assistant U.S. attorney Eric O'Malley and the Office of the Public's Auditor Travis Hurst were present in the conference room with him during the phone conversation.

Park said he made the call on his government-issued cell phone and that the conversation pertaining to Vecchi's statements were not overheard by O'Malley or Hurst since the call was not in speakerphone mode.

He said after a brief casual conversation with Vecchi about being deployed to Iraq together years ago, he advised Vecchi that he was the case agent for the ongoing criminal investigation into Efraim Atalig.

Park said he mentioned that Vecchi was recently included in a motion by the defense attorney as an expert witness, that he advised Vecchi that the reason for the call was to inquire about what Vecchi may be testifying about.

The special agent said Vecchi confirmed that he was

indeed recently contacted by the defense but that Vecchi "had no clue" what the defense was asking him to testify about. He said Vecchi advised that he was waiting for a response from the defense on the approval for the defense to pay him.

Park said when asked about Vecchi's travel plans to Saipan for the jury trial supposedly starting last March 10, Vecchi said he was not aware of the trial date and he did not have any travel arrangements to come to the island.

Park said when asked about whether former FBI special agent Jay Wolfe from the defense had contacted him, Vecchi replied that he did not know Wolfe. Park said he advised Vecchi that Wolfe is a former FBI special agent and his former co-worker, was recently terminated, and now working as a defense investigator.

"At the conclusion of the call, I advised Vecchi that we should meet up [on] Saipan for social purposes after the trial to which he agreed by

asking me to send him my contact information," he said.

Park said the conversation was cordial in nature, with Vecchi even stating that he was currently relaxing on his patio deck smoking a cigar.

In the opposition to the motion, assistant U.S. attorney Garth Backe, O'Malley's co-counsel for the U.S. government in the Ataligs' case, said the court should deny the Ataligs' motion because it is both legally unsupported and factually incorrect.

Although communicating with an opposing party's expert witness is arguably prohibited in civil cases, or at least it was at some time, Backe said there is no such prohibition—legal or ethical—in the criminal context. Backe noted that at the time of the call, Vecchi was not a witness for the defense.

"To the government's understanding, he had not yet signed a contract or accepted a retainer, and therefore had no binding legal relationship with the defense," the prosecutor said.

In the federal court case, the charges against Efraim and Evelyn Atalig involve at least eight trips taken by the couple at different times in 2018 to Guam, Palau, the U.S. mainland, South Korea, and Saipan.

The Ataligs are being charged jointly with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and theft from program receiving federal funds, wire fraud, and theft from program receiving federal funds. Both are also charged separately with false statement.

Last week, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona postponed the jury trial due to coronavirus pandemic. Manglona vacated the jury trial set to begin last Wednesday and the motion hearing set for Tuesday last week.

A status conference is set for April 29 at 1:30pm.

In the Superior Court case, Efraim Atalig and the seven co-defendants are being charged with misconduct in public office in connection with a Guam political rally. It is not clear when that trial will proceed due to the coronavirus pandemic and other reasons.

NAP to issue benefits through drive-thru service

In conformance with the governor's Public Health Emergency declaration and to ensure that protocols for social distancing are in place, the Nutrition Assistance Program will be distributing April 2020 benefits through drive-thru service at its office in As Lito.

This means eligible households will be issued their benefits to them while in their vehicle. The purpose of this drive-thru service is to ensure safety and protection of the public and Nutrition Assistance Program personnel from Covid-19. There will be no walk-in

service. Issuance of benefits will be performed through the drive-thru service only. Walk-in service will be available on April 16, 2020. Additionally, only those whose names appear on the valid NAP Identification Card may receive their household's benefits. In

addition to the NAP Identification Card, the individual must have a valid photo identification card such as a valid driver's license or passport.

The Nutrition Assistance Program has developed a schematic of how the benefit distribution will take place.

Program has developed a schematic of how the benefit distribution will take place.

Kilili: Dislocated Worker Grants available in Marianas

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) said the Marianas is eligible for Dislocated Worker Grant funding the U.S. Department of Labor announced last Wednesday, with \$100 million available for the grants nationwide. The grants pay workers laid off because of the coronavirus to perform disaster-related jobs or get training.

"We included information about the \$100 million for Dislocated Worker Grants in Friday's *e-kilili* newsletter and were asked to double-check the Marianas is eligible," Sablan said.

"Talking with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Congressional Affairs, we confirmed that, yes, the Marianas is eligible, as are all states and insular areas, as well as Indian tribal governments.

"Of course, \$100 million will be used quickly with more and more Americans out

of work because of the coronavirus. But this money is a down payment on much larger funding that we are preparing to pass in Congress this week," he said.

The CNMI Department of Labor has experience apply-

» \$100 million nationwide to aid laid-off workers

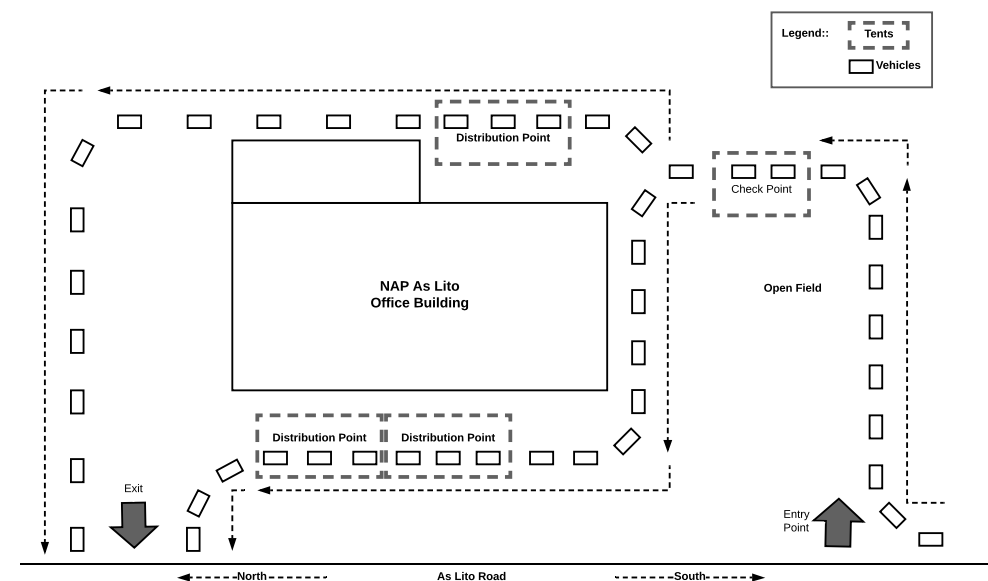
ing for and administering the Dislocated Worker Grants, which were also available after Super Typhoon Yutu.

Eligible workers include those laid off after their employer's business closes or who cannot go to their regular workplace because of the social distancing requirements in place to stop the spread of the disease. Workers who miss work to care for a family member or who are quarantined because they are sick are also eligible. Self-employed

individuals, too, who are unemployed or underemployed because of the virus, qualify for the help.

The grants can pay workers to organize or deliver medicine, food, and supplies to the elderly and others, who cannot leave home because they are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus. With many people forced to shelter in place this way and Commonwealth government austerity measures, there could be an increased need for this kind of humanitarian assistance.

Jobs for dislocated workers after a typhoon often include debris removal, but similar clean-up activities are needed now. The U.S. Department of Labor says its grants can be used to hire people to clean schools or sanitize quarantine or treatment areas after their use. Training activities also can be paid for with the Dislocated Worker Grant funds. (PR)



Schedule for Saipan

April 1	Wednesday	Case Records Ending with "1"
April 2	Thursday	Case Records Ending with "2"
April 3	Friday	Case Records Ending with "3"
April 6	Monday	Case Records Ending with "4"
April 7	Tuesday	Case Records Ending with "5"
April 8	Wednesday	Case Records Ending with "6"
April 9	Thursday	Case Records Ending with "7"
April 13	Monday	Case Records Ending with "8"
April 14	Tuesday	Case Records Ending with "9"
April 15	Wednesday	Case Records Ending with "0"
April 16	Thursday	Open Day

Open Day is intended for households who missed or were unable to pick up their benefits according to the Issuance Schedule. Walk-in service will be available on Open Day, April 16, 2020. The NAP will strictly enforce the issuance schedule, there will be no early issuances.

For questions regarding the status of their applications please contact the NAP office at 237-2801 or 2802. (PR)



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOVERNMENT RESOURCE LISTING AS OF MARCH 23, 2020



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC)
Monday - Friday
Customer Service & Customer Service
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Tel: (670) 664-4282
Pay bills online at www.cucgov.org or
via phone by calling toll free 1-855-729-2282



Office of the Attorney General
Civil and Criminal Divisions
Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Tel: (670) 237-7500/7600



Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP)
Monday - Friday
7:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Tel: (670) 237-2801/2802



Department of Finance
Division of Revenue & Taxation
CASHIER ONLY
Monday - Friday
7:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Tel: (670) 664-1000



Department of Public Works (DPW)
Lower Base Transfer Station
OPEN ALL WEEK EXCEPT WEDNESDAY
7:30 AM - 11:00 AM
Tel: (670) 322-3745



Division of Youth Services (DYS) On-Call
Saipan: (670) 285-2780 / 285-2781 / 287-1773
Tinian: (670) 287-3268
Rota: (670) 287-2553

Division of Customs Services
Airport: OPEN DAILY
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Seaport: Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM



U.S. Postal Services (Chalan Kanoa)
Monday - Friday
7:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturday
7:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Building Safety Code Division
Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Office of the Public Defender
Monday - Friday
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM
Tel: (670) 234-6503



The Northern Marianas Technical Institute board of trustees poses for a picture at the NMTI office in Lower Base. Other photo shows the board at its meeting last March 12.

CHEVY ALIPIO

NMTI board elects new officers

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute board of trustees has elected Mario Valentino as chairman of the group in an election held last March 12 at the NMTI office in Lower Base.

The other new officers of NMTI board are Ray Pangelinan as vice chairman, Irene Holl as secretary, and Camelita Falsao as treasurer. The other board members are Catherine Attao-Toves, Rich-

ard Kautz, and Rota's representative Deron Mendiola.

According to Valentino, the board will continue to focus on the funding cuts that were made on the NMTI budget moving forward.

NMTI chief executive officer Agnes McPhetres is not losing hope, though, saying she and other NMTI officials continue to go up Capital Hill to ask for operations money from the Torres administration and the Leg-

islature. Recently, they asked the Legislature for funding amounting to \$300,000.

"Hopefully the Legislature is considering our request," she added.

Valentino will serve as board chairman for two years. Pangelinan as vice chairman will serve for four years. Holl will serve for two years. Falsao will serve for four years.

The next NMTI board meeting will be on April 9 at the Bridge Capital LLC office in Garapan. (Chevy Alipio)

SOCIAL DISTANCING TO BE IMPLEMENTED AT ALL OFFICES

COVID-19 HOTLINE TEL: (670) 285-1352 /1542/1672/1845

FOLLOW US @GOVERNORCNMI FOR THE LATEST NEWS & UPDATES

Who is affected by limited hours of operations?

Following the first death in Guam due to COVID-19, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres added Directive 14 to his second amended Executive Order 2020-04 declaring a continued state of significant emergency and public health emergency for the CNMI that took effect yesterday.

According to the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force statement yesterday evening, Directive 14, called "Enhanced Social Distancing Directive," is meant to limit public gatherings of people and to prevent potential public exposure of residents to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the CNMI. It is also meant to protect the elderly, the sick, and those with preexisting illnesses or underlying medical conditions, who are the most vulnerable to severe illness from the virus.

Based on the new directive, all businesses that have facilities open to the general public will only be allowed to open

from 6am to 1pm, businesses that are beyond 1pm cannot be open to the public.

Businesses that will only be open to the public from 6am to 1pm include, but are not limited to:

- Grocery stores, retail stores, farmers' markets, street markets, convenience stores, produce stands, and any store that sells household products (such as cleaning and personal care products) and other non-grocery products (such as clothing, electronics, and telecommunication services).

- Hardware stores
- Banks and financial institutions

- Entertainment facilities, movie theaters, skating rinks, children play areas, and arcades

- Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers

- Hair and nail salons

- Auto-supply, tire shops, auto-repair, and related facilities

- Car dealerships

- Insurance firms

- Businesses engaged in gaming such as the casino, video poker establishments, and e-gaming facilities.

- Businesses of the type described in this list.

Businesses can only set face-to-face appointments with customers and/or clients from 6am to 1pm.

Businesses that don't need to follow the time restriction due to not having high public interactions are garbage collection, sanitation services, mailing and delivery services, and businesses of similar type.

After 1pm business owners and employers can allow employees to continue working behind closed doors and away from public interaction and also have the option to close operations at 1pm.

Additionally, they are expected to follow social distancing that include: taking inventory and stocking up supplies within a grocery store

for the next day, administrative and clerical work, strategic planning and logistical planning, financial planning, record keeping, and producing budgets, small groups (less than 10) of employee training (in line with social distancing), small groups (less than 10) of professional development, and delivery and pickup of goods and services.

Exceptions and modifications

Business hours of restaurants, bars, and eateries are not affected by the time restrictions of Directive 14, but not allowed to have dine-in services.

Businesses are only allowed to serve food and beverages to customers that will be consumed off-premises, meaning at home or in an area away from public gatherings.

Restaurants can only serve customers through drive-thru,

take-out, curbside pick-up, and delivery options. Customers may enter the premises to purchase food or beverages for take-out.

Establishments offering food or beverages for take-out, including food trucks, must ensure that they have an environment where patrons maintain adequate social distancing.

Businesses located in airports or hospitals are exempt from this directive.

Hotel restaurants may continue to provide room service and take-out and catering services may continue.

Customers/consumers waiting in line should practice social distancing.

All public parks, including Managaha Island and the Grotto, are closed to the public.

Large public gatherings that exceed more than 10 people on beaches are not permitted except for individuals, and couples

and their children who may exercise or recreate on the beach.

Outside of the 6am-1pm hours, laundromats, dry-cleaners and laundry service providers may conduct drop-off/pick-up service.

Enforcement

The Commonwealth Health Care Corp., public and private health clinics, dental clinics and pharmacies are exempted from the restricted hours but may set hours that, in their judgment, deal with the threat of COVID-19. These facilities and businesses are encouraged to follow best social distancing practices.

Gas stations may remain open and set their own hours, but only for the dispensing of gasoline. If the station has a convenience store, then that store may not be open to the public before 6am or after 1pm. (*Office of the Governor*)

Bank of Guam revises branch hours

HAGATNA, Guam—Effective yesterday, March 24, 2020, Bank of Guam's Hagatna branch will remain open from 9am to 1pm, Monday through Friday, only. All other Guam branches remain closed.

All of the bank's branches throughout the neighboring Islands and San Francisco operating hours from Monday through Friday, also effective yesterday:

- CNMI (Saipan, Rota and Tinian) – 9am to 1pm (Chalan Piao closed)

- San Francisco - 9am to 1pm

- Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap) - 9am to 1pm

- Republic of the Marshall Islands (Majuro) – 10am to 2pm

- Republic of Palau – 9:30am to 1:30pm

- Transactions that are accepted in the branches that remain open are:

- Check cashing, deposits and withdrawals

- Loan and credit card payments

- Utility payments

- Merchant transactions

Joaquin P.L.G. Cook, Bank of Guam president and chief executive officer stated, "We have been regularly reviewing evolving COVID-19 events in our region, with our employees, customers and our

community at the forefront of our priorities. More than ever, protecting our community is critical. The decision was very difficult and not taken lightly. Our decision to limit Guam branch openings to a single one in Hagatna helps achieve our goal to slow the spread of COVID-19 and still provide needed services."

He went on to say, "Everyone must make a concerted effort to remain at home to strengthen social distancing and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Only as a community committed to the solidarity of this action can we protect ourselves, each other and our people." (*PR*)



EMPTY SATURDAY MARKET

The parking lot of Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe is usually crowded with vendors and customers every Saturday morning until noon, but the place was empty last Saturday in accordance with a gubernatorial directive encouraging social distancing due to the coronavirus pandemic.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

March 25, 1999

Market niche urged

With the cutthroat competition in the travel industry, the CNMI government must intensify efforts to establish an image of Saipan that will make it unique from other destinations in the Pacific, according to a Japan Airlines official. Tom Shigemitsu, director of JAL's international passenger marketing and sales department, said the Northern Marianas would need to promote its restaurants and shopping centers since these are important considerations for Japanese in choosing their holiday destinations. Shigemitsu commended the Marianas Visitors Authority for using the mascot "Saipanda" a new character resembling a panda bear with a rhinoceros horn nose, which he believes is effective.

Experts see daunting task ahead for CNMI

In a move to save the island's declining economy, a group of economists, financial analysts and planners recently gathered here to help officials plan for the CNMI's economic future. While experts agree that the Northern Marianas will be able to rise from its present difficulties, they also believe that efforts to improve the economy won't be an easy task due to forces beyond the government's control. "We want to look at industries

that offer business and employment opportunities capable of advancing the standard of living in the CNMI. We are looking at industries that require highly skilled and paid workers," said Jack Peters, director, Business Development Center.

March 25, 2005

MVA renews Japan advertising contract

The Marianas Visitors Authority has decided to renew its contract with a Japanese advertising company, amid concerns over the declining arrivals from the Northern Marianas' primary tourism market. MVA managing director Vicky I. Benavente said the agency had received approval from the Division of Procurement and Supply to renew its deal with Asatsu DK, whose \$921,000 initial contract expired on Dec. 31, 2004. Benavente said the new contract is now being routed for signatures and will take effect immediately. The term will end on Sept. 30, 2006.

Airport high roof project takes off

Work has begun on the \$4-million high roof replacement project at the Saipan International/Francisco C. Ada Airport. Commonwealth Ports Authority executive director Carlos Salas said AIC Marianas Inc. was given notice to proceed with the project on Nov. 2. But actual construction did not begin until recently, as the contractor had to import most of the needed materials and equipment from the United States. The federally funded project covers all the terminal buildings, including the commuter terminal at the Saipan airport. It will involve replacing the terminals' current wooden shingle roofs with corrugated metal sheets, Salas said.

'Infrastructure bill for PSS, NMC not enough'

Providing funds for the construction of schools alone is insufficient—if it is not coupled with funding for operations, said Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Charles V. Cepeda, commenting on House Bill 15-51. The bill, authored by Vice Speaker Justo Quitugua, aims to appropriate \$500,000 plus 10-percent rebate reduction revenue for the infrastructure needs of Northern Marianas College and the Public School System. "The chamber is asking the author to take a look at the funding because CIP funds would help the infrastructure project but where are we going to get the funds to run the facilities?" asked Cepeda, a newly confirmed member of NMC Board of Regents.

CPA to get \$1.6M from insurance providers

The Commonwealth Ports Authority stands to receive a total of \$1.6 million in insurance claims arising from damage to its seaport facilities during the onslaught of Super-typhoon Chaba in 2004. The CPA board has approved the settlement offer regarding the insurance claim. Of the \$1.6 million the CPA will get, some \$300,000 has already been paid. CPA board members who were present in Thursday meeting at the Saipan seaport—acting chair Antonio Camacho, directors Barbara Yamada and Serafin Dela Cruz, and treasurer Benigno Fejeran—unanimously voted to accept the settlement offer. As part of the settlement, the CPA will discharge Lloyds and certain London underwriters of liability under the insurance policy that covered seaport facilities on Saipan, Tinian and Rota when Chaba hit the islands and destroyed public infrastructure and private establishments.

Economic injury disaster loans for small businesses

The U.S. Small Business Administration is now offering federal assistance to all CNMI businesses and non-profit organizations, who have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the loss of tourists coming into the CNMI.

"In accordance with my recent request to [SBA], I'm pleased to inform all of you that SBA is now offering low-

interest federal disaster loans for small businesses and non-profit organizations of any size, including agricultural cooperatives and aquaculture enterprises, here in the CNMI," said Gov. Ralph DLG Torres. "We strongly encourage all impacted businesses and organizations to apply for these economic injury disaster loans."

Businesses may qualify

SBA automatically defers existing disaster loans through year's end

In an effort to assist small businesses with existing disaster loans during the coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemic, the U.S. Small Business Administration has informed Gov. Ralph DLG Torres that all SBA disaster loan payments will automatically be deferred through Dec. 31, 2020.

In a statement released by U.S. Small Business Administration administrator Jovita Carranza, she stated, "The SBA is looking at every option and taking every action to cut red tape and make it easier for small businesses to stay in business. Automatically deferring

existing SBA disaster loans through the end of the year will help borrowers during this unprecedented time."

This is one of the many actions that SBA is taking to assist small businesses across the CNMI. In addition to this deferment, SBA has made it easier to apply for new economic injury disaster loans and to allow for one-year deferments on those loans.

In response to the notice from SBA, Torres said, "We would like to thank President Donald J. Trump and...Carranza for continuing to find ways to assist and support all small business

across the nation, most especially here in the CNMI. This is a critical time for small businesses in the Commonwealth, some of who are still recovering from the economic impacts of Super Typhoon Yutu. This deferment will help alleviate some of their economic losses and help keep them afloat through this pandemic."

Torres is working with SBA in seeking further assessments on the economic impacts on small businesses to determine possible grant-in-aid opportunities to provide further relief from the economic injuries of this pandemic. (PR)

NMC moves forward with online classes

By JUSTINE NAUTA

justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Despite some slight hiccups, the Northern Marianas College's transition from face-to-face classes to virtual formats is going generally well, according to NMC interim president Frankie Eliptico.

"There are still many challenges and we are assessing them on a daily basis, but we have received positive feedback so far," he said. "The students, the faculty, and others at NMC have been amazing in their efforts to transition to virtual formats."

Eliptico acknowledges that the college is expected to further refine, modify, and adjust the online class system in a bid to further improve it as they move forward. "But that's to be expected when undertaking this scale of activity," he said.

Since March 18, students have begun meeting with their instructors through Zoom, a web-based video conferencing application, as a precautionary measure and in a bid to comply with the social distancing rule that is seen as an effective way to prevent a possible spread of COVID-19 virus in the CNMI. According to Eliptico, there is no specific date in place as to when the college will go back to face-to-face classes.

"We will bring our students and employees back to campus once it is safe to do so," Eliptico said.

Eliptico also said that the college has developed a Pandemic Planning Task Force,

which is intended to help the NMC community prepare for a potential outbreak in the CNMI.

"Our main priority is the students and their wellbeing," Eliptico said. "We will continue to monitor the spread of the virus and will inform our students and employees immediately of any changes to the academic calendar."

NMC counselors have been calling students to make sure they are faring well with their online classes.

An NMC student, who agreed to talk about his experience on the condition of anonymity, said that he doesn't really like it mainly because of technological issues, but understands that it's something that he has to get used to.

"I mean, I guess I'm fine with it, it would be better if I was equipped for it," he said. He stated that he's not used to seeing classmates through a single screen and prefers to be on campus since he learns better in a face-to-face learning environment.

Another NMC student, who agreed to talk on the condition of anonymity, said that her experience hasn't been too bad. She's still able to ask questions about current topics, and she's able to still learn efficiently during each session.

"I'm okay with the current situation—I'm fortunate to have internet access but it's kind of unrealistic to expect everyone to do online classes so I hope they're [teachers] understanding of others," she said.

for Economic Injury Disaster Loans of up to \$2 million to mitigate the economic loss of our tourism industry as a result of COVID-19.

"I want to thank President Donald J. Trump, SBA administrator Jovita Carranza, and our private sector leaders—the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Northern Marianas Business Alliance, and the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands—for working with me and for sharing this opportunity with the business community. This is a collaborative effort to pro-

tect our businesses and their employees, because they are a vital part of our economy," Torres added.

The Economic Injury Disaster Loan program may apply to "small businesses, private non-profit organizations of any size, small agricultural cooperatives and small aquaculture enterprises that have been financially impacted as a direct result of the COVID-19."

The loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can't be paid because of

the disaster's impact. Disaster loans can provide vital economic assistance to small businesses to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing.

The Economic Injury Disaster Loan offers an interest rate of 3.75% for small businesses and an interest rate of 2.75% for non-profit organizations.

To apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information, and download applications, visit <http://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>.

All applications must be completed and mailed to U.S.

Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155 no later than Dec. 21, 2020.

For more information on the SBA disaster assistance, contact the SBA's Customer Service Center, call (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may call (800) 877-8339.

Available SBA resources and services can be found on their website: SBA.gov/coronavirus. (PR)



DOWN TO A TRICKLE

A small group of tourists poses for pictures at a nearly deserted Banzai Cliff Saturday morning. Last week, following the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Guam, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres ordered a more stringent 14-day quarantine for people coming into the CNMI, the implementation of which began last Monday, March 23.

IVA MAURIN



Revised hours at transfer station, landfill

Department of Public Works has revised the operating hours of the Lower Base Transfer Station and the Marpi Landfill to comply with Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' Directive 14 that amended Executive Order 2020-04 declaring a continued state of significant emergency and public health emergency for the CNMI.

The new schedule is as follows:

■ Lower Base Transfer Station

Open all week except Wednesday

7:30am-11am

Tel: (670) 322-2745 (Lower Base office)

■ Marpi Landfill

Beginning March 24, 2020, open all week except Wednesday 7:30am-3pm

(670) 322-2761 (Marpi Landfill office). (PR)

Expired vehicle registration, driver's license are extended

The Bureau of Motor Vehicles of the CNMI Department of Public Safety will be extending recently expired driver's licenses and vehicle registrations without penalty.

All expired driver's licenses have a grace period of 30 working days after the expiration date for renewal before a \$20 penalty fee is owed. All expired vehicle registrations

have a grace period of 10 days after the expiration date for renewal before a \$30 penalty fee is owed. As of March 16, 2020, BMV was temporarily closed, as part of the nationwide concern of the coronavirus.

All recent expired driver's licenses and vehicle registrations will have their expiration dates extended. For example, if your CNMI driver's license

or vehicle registration expires during the temporary closure of BMV, you will be granted a waiver without penalty until the BMV reopens for normal operation.

If you have an expired driver's license or vehicle registration, BMV would like to ask the public to notify their insurance provider as a courtesy.

Officers conducting pa-

trol are aware of this and are mindful of recently expired driver's licenses and vehicle registrations.

The COVID-19 Task Force and the CNMI Department of Public Safety advise the public to refrain from making unnecessary trips to public places. Limit public exposure to grocery store trips and food pick-ups. (PR)

Opinion

Hafa Adail

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Stop sending health care workers into battle without armor

By NAOMI ISHISAKA

The Seattle Times

Naomi Ishisaka is a columnist for the *Seattle Times*. Email: nishisaka@seattletimes.com; on Twitter: @naomi-ishisaka.



It has gotten so bad that hospital workers are now making their own masks.

On March 17, workers from Providence St. Joseph Health gathered on a makeshift assembly line at the hospital system's Seattle-area headquarters and used materials from Home Depot and craft stores to assemble 500 face shields to be sent out for use that night. Later in the week, administrators demonstrated how to make face masks at home with a sewing machine and asked the public to help sew 100 million masks for frontline health care workers trying to do their jobs during the coronavirus pandemic.

Personal protective equipment, or PPE, is on everyone's mind right now. But for health care workers, the masks, gloves and gowns they need to stay safe on the job are an urgent necessity. PPE shortages create risks not just for workers themselves, but for their families, patients and the already overburdened health care system.

Dawn Aldinger, a longtime registered nurse in the hematology oncology department at Swedish First Hill in Seattle, has been pleading with anyone who will listen to pay attention to the PPE crisis.

An Army veteran, Aldinger compared the needs of health care workers during this pandemic to being a soldier. In basic training, Aldinger said, you are given Kevlar body armor, a helmet and a rifle. For health care workers, the rifle is the equipment needed to care for patients; the body armor is the PPE workers need to protect themselves and keep themselves safe so they can continue to fight and care for their patients.

"As far as I'm concerned," Aldinger said, "(the Trump) administration has done the equivalent of sending a soldier into battle without their Kevlar, helmet and body armor. They are expecting us to go in just with the rifle."

We knew this "tsunami" of need was coming since the virus took hold in China months ago, Aldinger said, but the U.S. was slow to acknowledge the severity of the coming crisis and failed to act to secure the necessary equipment. On Thursday, when discussing why the federal government had not done more, President Donald Trump said it was up to governors to get the supplies they needed because, "you know, we're not a shipping clerk."

It's not just the shortage of PPE that workers like Alding-

See STOP on Next Page



Finagpu` Ha`ane

Sige hu abirigua haf` na este na lemlem tautau mampus triste sentimentog-hu. Señat suette pat haf` mohon? Siempre tali`e!

Era mamaya` hinassoghu gi pinadesen manadan familia gi halum didog na tiempun ha`ilas ni hinegse sagun pipinu`, coronavirus. Kau este na mampus silensiu i tanu`?

Magahet na sumen nachatsaga i guaha 15-mit na empleau guine gumagana suetdun popble.

Mauleg na kinatsu este ni kutturán ina`ayuda gi halum tautau-ta. Este na sensia sumede linibianu gi halum te`ug na chinatsaga. I gineftautau-ta kumonfitna inapinitiyen familia gi halum didog na mattirun ha`ilas. Tat pahina guine na fina`pus tautau tihu de memoria. Malofanyu` guine na kañada gi pinatgonhu.

Mauleg sa` guaha ayudun food stamps ni umayuda familia disiente na sentada gi lamasan sena. Gi sisienta siha na sakan sale ham de `in pañut mañglu` haya. Dispues `in gimen hanum grifu kumu sena antes de oran deskansu. Diberas!

Kastigu

I sagun coronavirus, pipinu`. Kastigu para ayu i esta mangai problema korason, gofes yan otru seriusu na pinadese.

Si Presidente Trump ha chule` i asuntun coronavirus ya guiya mumanda ma-estudiayen este na pesti. Fuera de pipinu` sumen chadeg ha chalapungue`.

Mauleg sa` umentalu` i federat ya puede masoda` amot este na pesti. Kontodu bisnis mañanau gi pinetsige pot inadahen hinemlu` unu yan todú.

Taya` trabiha nu este na sagu guine ya puede tiha fatoigue hit. Makat piot para i man-amku`.

Abisu: Saga gi gima! Suhaye lugat `nai guaha mas ke dies na tautau! Gaige obligasion proteksion hinemlo`mu giya hagu mismu!

Señat i chenut ha inklusu masisineg, mumuta` yan putin estomagu. Mina` pipinu` pot ha saguaniye hanum i gofes `nai chinema` i tautau humaguñ estake dimalas, segun i ripot mediku.

I chenut siña gaige giya hagu pot kuattru dias ya ti un` tuñgu` pot tai señat. Dispues un` tutuhun masisineg, lo`lu` yan muta`.

Ayu mas u fan sinapet i man-amku` piot i mangai chenut antes de u fan sinagu. Tai amot este na pesti!

Ma-estudiadiaye ni mediku pa`gu lau tinaka kase dos años estake siña masoda`e amotña. Puede lachadeg antes de una` fan dimalas lamegai na tautau.

Suette sa` taya` pa`gu nu este na chenut guine. Puede tiha fatoigue hit gi karera pot makat na kontrariu. Dispues, sige chumaleg si Magu na guaha ha` amotña i chenut. "Gimen manaloglug hagu kamachili sa` areglau!" Dios mihu!

Machum

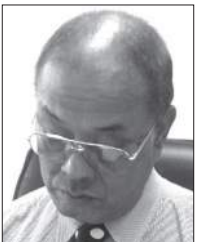
Giya America todú aktibidat `nai guaha inetnun tautau mana fan para pot no umachalapun mas i pestin coronavirus. Guine, mauleg in` eksisia parehu na disposision pot no in` chansa man-malañgu ginen este na pesti.

Namanman na sagu pot masusesede doku` namaisa gi sanh-

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.

Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands. All views expressed by the author are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion and stance of the Saipan Tribune.



alum tautau sin matatme. Pot makat na sagu na mauleg in` adahe man-amku` miyu gi gima` yan famaguon siha. Inadahe mas fitme na pisu `nai siña ta ataha este na sagu.

Mientras tanto, esta guaha siete mit manpininu` yan ochenta mit mantinatme. Makat piot gi ayu siha na nasion i chat-fitme sistema yan faisilidat hinemlu`. Lamegai siempre u fan dimalas ginen este na sagu. Adahe hinanau miyu ya in` suhaye inetnun tautau.

Man-amku`

Iya Italia (Italy) hana` para ayudun hinemlu` gi man-amku` ni esta mangaige gi idat 80. Ma-utut ayudu gi idat `nai mas te`ug nesessidat assistimientu gi man-amku`. Dios mihu!

Makat para i natibun este siha na petlas machogue fina` tailaye gi man-amko`ta. Ti este man-mafanague-ta mina` man-sattun hit uma-siste mañainata. Dispues de todú ti apasiyun na sakrifisium niha?

Namagof lokue` i inesgun famaguon guine na patte pot makomprende haf` signifikasion saina. Finu` man-amku`, an malagu hau libianu yan anaku` ha` animu respeta i mañainamu. Agradesiyun todú sakrifisium niha pot para tamana` fan dañkulu felis.

Huli`e minesñgun nanahu gi halum tinaya` yan animun tatahu gi gualu` pot nesessidat familia. Hu tuñgu` na yayas lau sin parat pot para u tanum ta`lu un` troñkun choda antes de u homhum.

Huli`e si nanahu ha mattitgue` pot hame. Dispues de madisipone tai minagtus tinayuyot-hu para guiya diariu. Sumen agradesiyun todú sakrifisioña para una` fan felis ham gi kareran mame. Mit gracias!

Sagu

Sagun Coronavirus kontodu cho`chu` entre ma-utut i ora `sino mahuchum. Komprendiyun i disision. Lau makat gi empleau ni gotpe ma-utut solu monedan familia.

Sapet gi familia pot maribaha para apas guma`, kareta yan otru siha diariu na nesessidat. Un` ira na tat tiha sapet gi hinanau megai gi tautau-ta. Kontodu industrián bisita ha huchum. I pinadese gaige `nai hinichum lokue` cho`chu` siha gi hotel yan todú bisnis bisita.

Klaru na inipus paska na industria ni libianu mafondu pot sentidu gi haf` masusede gi oriya. Maribaha numerun bisita `nai inafekta todú bisnis turista guine. Haye para u atrebigue` kumarera gi halum pipinu` na sagu! Dañkulu maribahan bisita ginen Japon, China, Taiwan yan otru siha lugat gi oriya.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Minority bloc calls for ban on social gatherings

By **HOUSE MINORITY BLOC**
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Dear Gov. Ralph DLG Torres: Thank you for your letter of March 21, and for the details you have provided on your efforts to secure federal assistance for the Commonwealth to address the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

In particular, we applaud you for making the request to the U.S. Small Business Administration for an Economic Injury Disaster Declaration. The Saipan Chamber of Commerce and its partners also deserve praise for cooperating with your administration and moving quickly to submit the last of the required worksheets to you on March 20. And thankfully, the SBA has responded quickly in issuing the Economic Injury Disaster declaration and making much-needed loans available to help the Commonwealth's struggling businesses keep afloat.

We also appreciate that you have agreed to make the request to President Donald J. Trump for a Major Disaster declaration. At least two other governors, Gov. Cuomo of New York and Gov. Inslee of Washington, have already asked for a federal Major Disaster declaration, and Gov. Leon Guerrero of Guam has announced that she will be seeking one as well.

It is, indeed, an unprecedented use of the Stafford Act for the President to declare a Major Disaster in response to a pandemic. But COVID-19 is as much a natural catastrophe as a super typhoon, and the impacts to life and property no less dire. Although critical emergency protective resources are now available to the Commonwealth under the national state of emergency, much more expansive assistance is needed that would be released under a federal declaration of a Major Disaster. In recent days, we have fielded inquiries from anxious constituents specifically about disaster food stamps, disaster unemployment benefits, and

disaster legal services. A federal declaration of a Major Disaster would make these and many other programs available to our people. Please let us know if we can be of assistance in preparing or supporting your request.

Thank you, also, for accepting our invitation for bipartisan collaboration. Regarding your COVID-19 briefing at your conference room last week, we received notice via a WhatsApp message that was forwarded from the Speaker's office approximately 2.5 hours before the meeting. Because we have been making a conscientious effort to abide by the urgent recommendations of public health officials as well as the directives of your emergency declaration, to avoid large gatherings in order to stop the spread of the coronavirus, we were concerned about all of us attending the meeting in person. We did inquire whether teleconferencing was an option for this meeting, but received no response, though the Speaker's Office attempted to reach out to your office. Ultimately, we agreed to send two of our minority members to the meeting—Rep. Villagomez and Rep. Babauta—while the rest of us participated via a group call, on Rep. Babauta's cell phone.

So, to be clear, governor, all of the members of the minority attended your briefing, listening in on the discussion and submitting questions for Rep. Babauta and Rep. Villagomez to ask. In the future, we respectfully request and urge that you utilize available technology to make remote participation in all your meetings possible, consistent with your executive order and the advice of public health experts to practice social distancing. Crowded meetings in your conference room, with all the members of the Legislature, along with the members of your COVID-19 Task Force and staff, are neither safe nor wise at this time.

Lastly, in the spirit of unity, we continue to hope for your favorable response to our requests for greater financial transparency from your administration, and for amendments to your emergency directives in order to expand protections for the

Commonwealth's citizens and businesses. Our recommendations for executive order amendments are in line with the actions already taken by state and local governments across the nation, and are also based on the concerns brought to us by constituents throughout the Commonwealth. In this state of emergency, people must be protected from losing their homes, livelihoods, and access to critical utilities. Taxpayers need relief from upcoming deadlines and penalties. Government employees showing up to work must be protected from infection to the greatest extent possible, and they must be assured more flexibility and access to sick leave if needed to care for themselves and their families.

And, as soon as possible, we need a mandatory Commonwealth-wide lockdown on social gatherings in any public venue for at least the next two weeks. Despite your emergency declaration and public outreach urging residents to stay home, we continue to receive reports from worried citizens about parties, novenas, cockfights, crowded gaming establishments, etc. We believe that a higher level of enforcement is necessary at this point, and we urge you to take that next step. We also urge that you implement a strict, mandatory quarantine for all incoming travelers, enforceable by fines and penalties, similar to that recently ordered by Hawaii's Gov. Ige and in accordance with the CNMI Emergency Health Powers Act, 3 CMC §§ 2181 et seq.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. We, too, look forward to continued dialogue and engagement with your administration in navigating the path ahead, for the sake of the community we were all elected to serve.

The House of Representatives' minority bloc is composed of Rep. Ed Propst, Precinct 1; Rep. Christina Sablan, Precinct 2; Rep. Edmund Villagomez, Precinct 3; Rep. Sheila Babauta, Precinct 4; Rep. Richard Lizama, Precinct 5; and Rep. Donald Manglona, Precinct 7.

Message to military and the community

The past six weeks has been a dynamic and stressful time for all of us here on Guam, in the CNMI, and across Oceania. We all watched the COVID-19 outbreak and its spread around the globe with concern and trepidation. As international governments worked hard to develop a response, locally your military leadership has been in constant communication with government of Guam leadership concerning a synchronized, islandwide response. We have been transparent concerning possible military cases on our installations and within our operational units, which thankfully, were all negative. We have worked to communicate concerns about bringing vessels with large populations that could potentially introduce a transmission vector for this virus to our island that would have placed significant stress on our medical systems. Today we continue to share information and plans across our fence lines to ensure we can respond in the best manner to any outbreak on our island.

This openness and transparency, though, has a second order effect of adding additional information to the facts, rumors, and fiction we are bombarded with every day. The effect is to add to the stress we are all feeling and our own individualized fears that may be developing as we work through this crisis. This stress,

which is not localized to any one person or group of people, threatens to fracture the Guam civilian-military team. We cannot let that happen—we are all in this together.

As we work through this crisis together, we must all realize that as much as we try to align and support across local government and military lines, we each have different tasks and missions that we are responsible to accomplish. The military is working hard to continue to take care of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, guardsmen, Coast guardsmen and reservists, doing its best to ensure it does not contribute to the spread of the virus, and, most importantly, to preserve our warfighting readiness in order to be prepared to respond to a crisis that requires military force. In order to accomplish these tasks and best mitigate the risk of spreading the virus, we have had to control access to our bases (including critical facilities like the commissary and hospital), and limit some of our non-essential services—measures that are consistent with the guidelines issued by the governor in the Public Health Emergency declaration. It is important to note that this cannot and will not devolve into an “us” versus “them” distinction. We must all remember that these measures and inconveniences, borne by all groups, are a necessary step to minimize and stop the further transmission on our island. These measures

By **JOHN V. MENONI**
Special to the Saipan Tribune



Rear Adm. John V. Menoni is commander of Joint Region Marianas.

may break the chain of transmission that could prevent an infection and possibly save the life of a family member, shipmate, friend or neighbor. Small actions, such as the 14-day isolation/restriction-of-movement that I am personally observing, though inconvenient and irritating, are the key to beating this enemy and saving lives.

As the region commander, I continue my commitment to open and transparent communications, to work with the governor and local leaders on solutions with an eye toward what is best for Guam as a whole, and to continue to preserve the fighting readiness of our forces so they can do their jobs.

STOP

From Page 10

er are worried about, it's the shifting guidance on what kind of PPE to wear and for how long.

Aldinger and several other health care workers I spoke to, most of whom did not want to use their names for fear of reprisals from their employers, reported similar experiences in their Seattle-area hospitals.

First they were told, “Wear N95 masks. Don't reuse them.” Then, “No, go ahead and use less protective surgical masks. And if you have an N95, store them in plastic bags for reuse.” Finally: “Oh, what the heck: Use bandannas!”

In other words, CDC guidelines were being changed based on PPE availability, not safety. A Change.org petition signed by

750,000 people on Friday asked the federal government to do whatever it could to get PPE for workers and to not change CDC guidelines based on the supply chain.

The fears of health care workers are not hypothetical. In Italy last week, Doctors Without Borders reported 1,700 health care workers (or 8% of the total) were infected by COVID-19. An Italian doctor who complained of having to work without gloves, died on Wednesday. One emergency room doctor in Kirkland, Wash., was infected and in critical condition with the disease.

With no PPE cavalry in sight, workers are reaching out directly to the public for help. With campaigns like #GetMePPE and #PPEIsNotOptional, workers are begging the public who might have masks and other PPE in their homes to donate it to hospitals.

While these efforts help, they are a drop in a huge bucket.

A U.S. Health and Human Services official said earlier this month that the U.S. has only 1% of the masks needed in a full-blown pandemic.

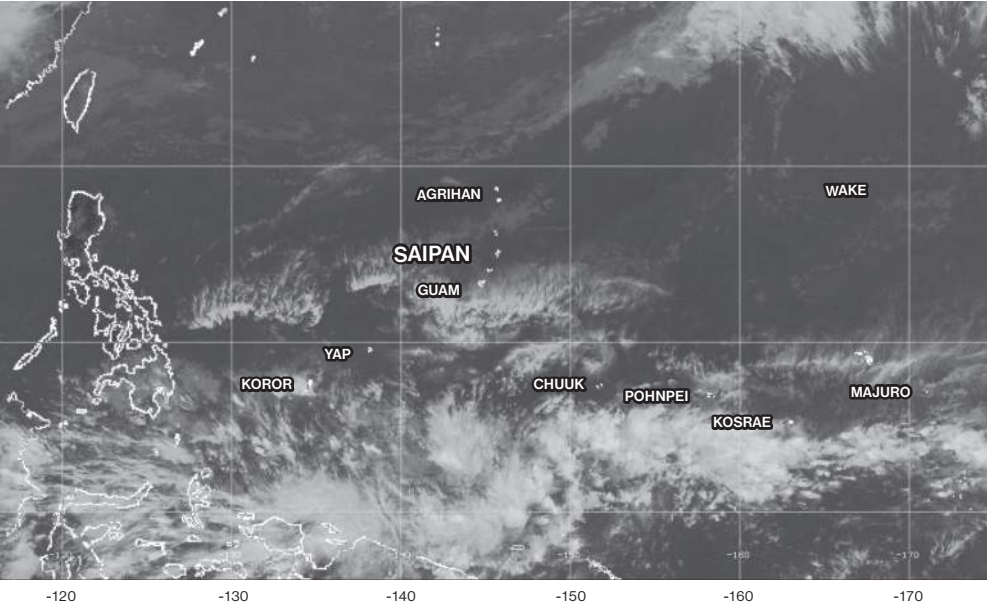
Aldinger said workers have no illusions about what they are up against. “Every single health care worker working in a hospital right now is terrified of getting in the car and driving to work,” she said. Yet, despite the dangers, health care workers will continue to show up and help patients, she said, because it's who they are.

“There are just people in this world that when there's a fire they will run toward it.”

That's a noble virtue. But health care workers should not have to risk their lives to provide care. We must do all we can to ensure they have the armor they need to fight this battle, today and beyond.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
Partly cloudy. A slight chance of light showers. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with a slight chance of light showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.		Breezy during the day. Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.		Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	
88°	75°	88°	76°	88°	76°	87°	76°	88°	76°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 6:46 AM, TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2020
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Mostly cloudy skies stuck around a bit longer than expected and will likely clear out of the area through the morning. By mid-morning, drier air will move over the islands, bringing partly cloudy skies back to the region. This dry pattern will continue through the weekend. A weak shear line is expected to move through the Marianas late in the week through the weekend. This will bring increasing showers though little rainfall is expected. Gentle to moderate trade winds will increase to moderate to fresh by Thursday with breezy conditions likely beginning Friday.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Windy	86° / 76°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°	
Yap	Partly Cloudy	87° / 80°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	87° / 81°	
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°	
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°	
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 81°	

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	70° / 57°	
Beijing	Showers	52° / 34°	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	79° / 72°	
Honolulu	Windy	77° / 69°	
London	Mostly Sunny	55° / 32°	
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	63° / 47°	
Manila	Mostly Sunny	93° / 79°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	66° / 52°	
Miami	Mostly Sunny	84° / 69°	
New York	Showers	46° / 41°	
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	66° / 55°	
Paris	Sunny	54° / 34°	
Busan	Rain	63° / 59°	
Rome	Mostly Sunny	55° / 37°	
Salem	Mostly Sunny	81° / 55°	
San Francisco	Showers	53° / 43°	
Seoul	Rain	64° / 52°	
Tokyo	Sunny	66° / 52°	
Washington, DC	Showers	52° / 43°	

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PAPA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
2:27 AM	LOW TIDE	0.32	
8:28 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.73	
2:48 PM	LOW TIDE	0.50	
8:34 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.73	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:17 AM	6:28 PM
Thursday	6:16 AM	6:28 PM
Friday	6:16 AM	6:28 PM
Saturday	6:15 AM	6:28 PM
Sunday	6:14 AM	6:29 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	6:50 AM	7:11 PM	-
Thursday	7:26 AM	7:57 PM	-
Friday	8:01 AM	8:45 PM	-
Saturday	8:39 AM	9:33 PM	-
Sunday	9:19 AM	10:24 PM	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MARCH 22, 2020

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	9:15am	9:55am	1, 4, 6, 7	UA174	7:30am	8:11am	1, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
SKY816	4:35pm	7:30pm	Daily up to Mar 25 only	SKY811	10:15am	3:00pm	Daily up to Mar 25 only
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	9:15am	9:50pm	1, 6, 7 via GUM	UA184/174	10:55pm	8:11am+1	3, 6, 7 via GUM

OTHER FLIGHTS SUSPENDED

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U Sichuan Airlines, 7C Jeju Air, DL Delta Airlines, JD Beijing Capital, UO HK Express, HX HongKong Airlines, MU China Eastern, OZ Asiana Airlines, TW t'way Air, UA United Airlines, BC SkyMark ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.							
SAIPAN TO ROTA				1203	9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	1204	10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
1301	7:30AM	8:00AM	Daily	1205	11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
1302	11:30AM	12:00PM	Daily	1206	12:00PM	12:15PM	Daily
1303	4:00PM	4:30PM	Daily	1207	1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN				1208	2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	1209	3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
3101	8:15AM	8:45AM	Daily	1210	4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
3102	1:45PM	2:15PM	Daily	1211	5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
3103	4:45PM	5:15PM	Daily	1212	6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM				TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15PM	12:45PM	Daily	2102	7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
GUAM TO ROTA				2103	8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	2104	9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
4301	1:00PM	1:30PM	Daily	2105	10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				2106	11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	2107	12:30PM	12:45PM	Daily
1201	7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily	2108	1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
1202	8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily	2109	2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
				2110	3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
				2111	4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
				2112	5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
				2113	6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

Business



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Tom Yum Restaurant's new operating hours for take-out orders is now 10am-9pm.

By **BEA CABRERA**
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Saipan's favorite Thai and American food place has launched an online service on Face that makes it easier for customers to order their take-out food. Just look for "Tom Yum Restaurant On-Line Service" and add it to your

network.

The page informs customers of current menu choices, prices, and once one is ready to order, they can place their menu or phone in orders at (670) 488-2963, (670) 285-5943, and (670) 989-5165 for take-out.

"This is in line with the Second Amended Executive Order 2020-04 signed by Gov.

Ralph Torres last Monday where restaurants are to suspend dine-in services but offer take-out service," said Tom Yum manager Natalia Gvan.

"We want to be accessible to our customers and be of service to them even in these times. We continue to do business and indeed it is an uneasy time for us but we are here,

Tom Yum Restaurant launches online service

ready to serve with the same quality of food," Gvan added.

Tom Yum Restaurant has also adjusted operating hours. They are now open daily from 10am to 9 pm. "Aside from Thai and American dishes, our menu includes Mexican and Italian dishes and we serve all every day. We also accommodate individual customer's requests," Gvan said.

"As for safety, we are mindful of that. Our chefs and servers wear masks and gloves. When they pick-up the food, we offer customers disinfecting wipes," Gvan added.

Tom Yum Restaurant was established in August last year and in an earlier interview, the restaurant is the 'baby' of longtime friends Gvan and Phannee Regen. "We are just simple housewives and we met because we pick up our children that goes to the same school. One time we had this agreement that we can be better, follow [our] passions," she said.

"I'm sure in every woman there is always a drive inside her to become better... some days you wake up thinking



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tom Yum Restaurant specialty pad thai comes in seafood or pork.

what you have accomplished and what you want to accomplish... Phannee and I wanted to stand out and this is our opportunity to see how far we

can go," she added.

Tom Yum Restaurant is located at the ground floor of Paradise Hotel along Middle Road.

Negotiators close on nearly \$2T virus aid package

WASHINGTON (AP)—Top congressional and White House officials emerged from grueling negotiations at the Capitol over the nearly \$2 trillion coronavirus rescue package saying they expected to reach a deal Tuesday.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said they had spoken by phone with President Donald Trump during the long night of negotiations. While the two sides have resolved many issues in the sweeping package, some remain.

At midnight Monday, they emerged separately to say talks would continue into the night.

"We look forward to having a deal tomorrow," Mnuchin told reporters after exiting Schumer's office.

"The president is giving us direction," Mnuchin said. "The president would like to have a deal and he's hopeful we can conclude this."

Moments later, Schumer agreed that a deal was almost within reach. "That's the expectation — that we finish it tomorrow and hopefully vote on it tomorrow evening," he said. The long evening of shuttle negotiations came after a long day trying to close the deal. The massive package is

a far-reaching effort to prop up the U.S. economy, help American households and bolster the health care system amid the growing crisis. Mnuchin said talks were expected to resume at 9:30 a.m. EDT.

Tensions flared Monday as Washington strained to respond to the worsening coronavirus outbreak, with Congress arguing over a nearly \$2 trillion economic rescue package and an impatient President Donald Trump musing openly about letting the 15-day shutdown expire next Monday, March 30.

As the U.S. braces for an onslaught of sick Americans, and millions are forced indoors to avert a spike that risks overwhelming hospitals, the most ambitious federal intervention in modern times is testing whether Washington can act swiftly to deal with the pandemic on the home front.

"It's time to get with the program, time to pass historic relief," said an angry Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell earlier in the day as he opened the chamber after a nonstop weekend session that failed to produce a deal. "This is a national emergency."

Fuming, McConnell warned Democrats — pointedly House Speaker Nancy

Pelosi — to quit stalling on "political games," as he described Democratic efforts to steer more of the aid toward public health and workers, and push other priorities.

Trump, who has largely been hands off from the negotiations, weighed in late Monday from the White House briefing room, declaring that Congress should vote "for the Senate bill as written," dismissing any Democratic proposal.

"It must go quickly," Trump said. "This is not the time for political agendas."

The president also sounded a note of frustration about the unprecedented modern-day effort to halt the virus's march by essentially shutting down public activities in ways that now threaten the U.S. economy.

Even though Trump's administration recommended Americans curtail activities starting a week ago, the president said: "We cannot let the cure be worse than the problem itself. At the end of the 15-day period, we will make a decision as to which way we want to go."

"Let's go to work," he said. "This country was not built to be shut down. This is not a country that was built for this."

Fed makes strongest bid yet to protect firms and governments

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Federal Reserve is unleashing its boldest effort yet to protect the U.S. economy from the coronavirus by helping companies and governments pay their bills and survive a devastating crisis.

With lending in Treasury and mortgage markets threatening to shut down, the Fed announced an aggressive set of programs Monday to try to smooth out those markets. To do so, it committed to buy as much government-backed debt as it deems necessary. And for the first time ever, the Fed said it plans to buy corporate debt, too.

Its intervention is intended to ensure that households, companies, banks and governments can get the loans they need at a time when their own revenue is fast drying up as the economy stalls.

The Fed's all-out effort to support the flow of credit through an economy ravaged by the viral outbreak has now gone beyond even the ex-

traordinary drive it made to rescue the economy from the 2008 financial crisis.

"The coronavirus pandemic is causing tremendous hardship across the United States and around the world," the Fed said in a statement. "Aggressive efforts must be taken across the public and private sectors to limit the losses to jobs and incomes and to promote a swift recovery once the disruptions abate."

The announcement initially lifted stocks in early trading. But rancorous talks in Congress over a \$2 trillion rescue package—and uncertainty over when any agreement might be reached—depressed shares about 2.5% in volatile midday trading. The yield on the 10-year Treasury bond fell, a sign that more investors are willing to purchase the securities.

With its new programs, the Fed, led by Chair Jerome Powell, is trying to both stabilize the economy and allay panic in financial markets.

As the need for cash has escalated among many corporations and city and state governments, large businesses have been drawing as much as they can on their existing borrowing relationships with banks.

The intensifying need for money means that banks and other investors are seeking to rapidly unload Treasuries, short-term corporate debt, municipal bonds and other securities. The Fed's move to intervene as a buyer of last resort is intended to supply that needed cash.

President Donald Trump, a frequent Fed critic, had rare praise for Powell on Monday.

"I really think he's caught up and he's done the right thing," Trump said during a White House press conference. He said he called Powell on Monday and said, "Jerome, good job." Less than two weeks ago, Trump was noting that he had the power to fire or demote the Fed chief.

Nation

Trump says he intends to reopen country in weeks, not months

WASHINGTON (AP)—As cases of coronavirus continue to rise, President Donald Trump said Monday that he wants to reopen the country for business in weeks, not months, as he claimed, without evidence, that continued closures could result in more deaths than the pandemic itself.

"We can't have the cure be worse than the problem," Trump told reporters at a briefing, echoing a midnight Sunday tweet. "We have to open our country because that causes problems that, in my opinion, could be far bigger problems."

Health experts have made clear that unless Americans continue to dramatically limit social interaction—staying home from work and isolating themselves—the number of infections will overwhelm the health care system, as it has in parts of Italy, leading to many more deaths. While the worst outbreaks are concentrated in certain parts of the country, such as New York, experts warn that the highly infectious disease is certain to spread.

But with the economic impact now snapping into focus and millions out of work, businesses shuttered and the markets in free fall—all undermining Trump's reelection message—the chorus of backlash is growing louder, with Trump appearing to side with them.

"Life is fragile and economies are fragile," Trump said, insisting he could protect both.

While he acknowledged



President Donald Trump gestures as he asks a question to Dr. Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus response coordinator, during a briefing about the coronavirus in the James Brady Briefing Room, Monday, March 23, 2020, in Washington. AP

there were trade-offs—"there's no question about that"—he claimed that, if closures stretch on for months, there would be "probably more death from that than anything that we're talking about with respect to the virus."

The comments were further evidence that Trump has

grown impatient with the pandemic, even before it has reached its expected peak. In recent days, tensions have been rising between those who argue the country needs to get back up and running to prevent a deep economic depression, and medical experts who warn that, unless more extreme ac-

tion is taken, the human cost will be catastrophic.

"We can't shut in the economy. The economic cost to individuals is just too great," Larry Kudlow, Trump's top economic adviser, said in an interview Monday on Fox News Channel. "The president is right. The cure can't be worse than

the disease, and we're going to have to make some difficult trade-offs."

It's an opinion that has been echoed by others in the White House, some Republicans in Congress and on Fox, where host Steve Hilton delivered a monologue Sunday night that appeared to have, at least par-

tially, inspired Trump's tweet.

"You know that famous phrase, the cure is worse than the disease? That is exactly the territory we're hurtling towards," Hilton told his viewers, describing the economic, social and human impact of the shutdown as an "even bigger crisis" than the virus.

Virus spurs unexpected test for US schools: Online learning

NEW YORK (AP)—The coronavirus shutdowns have launched an unplanned, unprecedented experiment with online education at schools across the U.S., and the nation's largest school system plunged in Monday as New York City asked over 1.1 million students to log in and learn.

After a whirlwind week of planning, students—those who could—signed in to Google classrooms and Zoom video conferences for virtual versions of everything from high-school English discussions to kindergarten gym classes. City officials were still trying to get laptops to hundreds of thousands of students in need. Parents grappled with how much to expect of their schools, their kids and themselves.

Emily James was pleased to see the vast majority of her ninth-grade English students showed up for class by video Monday, some using smartphones or borrowed laptops.

"They were engaged. They were happy to see each other," she said, and some students expressed a feeling they never thought they'd have: "They miss being in school."

At the same time, James' own prekindergarten and elementary-school daughters were starting online school. As a parent, her main goal was "just be patient ... let them be happy."

Officials are deciding how to take attendance for online learning, so no system-wide figure was immediately available Monday.

Virtual school—sometimes known by "distance learning" or other terms—has existed for decades. But it's far from ubiquitous in U.S. schools because of digital inequities among students, concerns about implications for teachers, and other factors.

Ready or not, schools everywhere are getting a crash course. In the U.S., more than 118,000

public and private schools in 45 states have closed, affecting 53 million students, according to a tally kept by Education Week.

"We're about to go into the very big unknown, but we're excited," New York City schools chancellor Richard Carranza said Friday. To him, it's an opportunity to take the concept to a grand scale.

Some other experts aren't so optimistic. They say too few U.S. educators have been trained to teach effectively online, and no one should expect too much of stopgap programs rolled out within days during a stressful time for teachers, students and families.

"It has the potential to be awesome, but not this way," said Michael Young, a University of Connecticut professor who specializes in education technology.

Educators, too, acknowledge that distance learning can only go so far.

In suburban Atlanta, the Fulton County school district has sped up computer purchasing and lent Wi-Fi hotspot devices to some of its 94,000 students. Superintendent Mike Looney credits teachers with delivering inventive and rigorous online instruction.

Still, "I don't want to give anyone the false pretense that the digital learning tools are as effective as a classroom teacher," he said.

Some school districts, including Philadelphia's, have decided against requiring online learning during their shutdowns, saying it wouldn't be fair to students without computers and high-speed internet at home. They're distributing packets on paper.

New York City, where an estimated 300,000 students don't own computers, has handed out 175,000 laptops and tablets so far and will distribute more in the coming weeks, Carranza said.

The promise of malaria drugs for coronavirus spurs hope, shortages

Excitement about treating the new coronavirus with malaria drugs is raising hopes, including with President Donald Trump. But the evidence that they may help is thin, and a run on the drugs is complicating access for people who need them for rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.

Chloroquine and a similar drug, hydroxychloroquine, showed encouraging signs in small, early tests against the coronavirus. But the drugs have major side effects, one reason scientists don't want to give them without evidence of their value, even in this emergency.

Yet those preliminary studies sparked intense interest after Trump tweeted that hydroxychloroquine plus an antibiotic could be "one of the biggest game changers in the history of medicine" and should "be put in use immediately." He cited a French study

that gave the combo to six patients.

Some French doctors and politicians also are pushing to expand hydroxychloroquine's use. The mayor of the French city of Nice, Christian Estrosi, said on television Monday that he was on his sixth day of treatment and has "the sense I've been cured."

Scientists, however, warn about raising false hopes and say major studies are needed to prove the drugs are safe and effective against coronavirus, and to show that people would not have recovered just as well on their own. One such study starts Tuesday in New York.

"Right now, there is no drug that looks like it's proven so overwhelming in early-stage clinical trials that we can say it's highly promising," former Food and Drug Administration commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." (AP)

Asia

India halts its crucial train network to try to stop virus

A passenger walks between railway tracks at New Delhi Railway station during a lockdown amid concerns over the spread of Coronavirus, in New Delhi, India, Monday, March 23, 2020.

AP

NEW DELHI (AP)—As India expanded its virus-containment measures and halted its train network, the country's lifeblood, the federal government warned Monday of strict legal action for those who flout the rules.

The wholesale shutdown of India's massive train system is

unprecedented.

"Please save yourself, save your family," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted in Hindi, calling for states to follow the preventive measures issued by the federal government to contain the spread of the virus.

The strict legal action

SoftBank to buy back \$41 billion in assets to trim debt

BANGKOK (AP)—The Japanese technology and telecoms company SoftBank said Monday it plans to buy back up to 4.5 trillion yen (\$41 billion) of its assets as it seeks to trim its gigantic debt burden.

The company's founder, Masayoshi Son, said the move reflected "the firm and unwavering confidence we have in our business."

Tokyo-based SoftBank will buy up to 2 trillion yen (\$18.1 billion) of its shares, Son said in a statement. Earlier, SoftBank announced a 500 billion yen (\$4.5 billion) share repurchase.

Acting at a time when the coronavirus outbreak has ramped up uncertainty for many industries, the company said it will spend the remaining 2.5 trillion yen on debt redemptions, bond buybacks and increasing its cash reserves.

The company said it believes its shares are undervalued by 73% to their "intrinsic value."

SoftBank Group Corp.'s share price jumped 18.6% on Monday to 3,187 yen (\$28.87).

Son said the share purchases amount to less than one-fifth of the company's total assets, while significantly reducing debt. The total 5 trillion yen (\$45.5 billion) in shares that will be repurchased over a

year's time account for 45% of the company's total shares and are to be retired, he said.

SoftBank's profit dropped to 55 billion yen (\$500 million) in the last quarter after it posted losses of 700 billion yen (\$6.4 billion) in the July-September quarter. The damage came largely from its Vision Fund, created to invest in startups like the shared office space venture WeWork and ride-hailing company Uber.

The reputation of the Vision Fund, which was started mostly with Saudi money, suffered in 2018, after the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The fund has been investing in various companies, solar projects and artificial intelligence.

Adding to the company's challenges has been SoftBank's bailout of WeWork last year. That invited scrutiny after WeWork, which bills itself as both a technology and real-estate company, canceled an initial public offering.

The company said Monday that it plans to improve its governance by asking an independent search company to find up to three candidates to become independent board members for approval at the company's annual general stockholders meeting.

vowed wasn't immediately clear. Other places have simply sent violators home, since alternatives like detention would create crowded conditions where the virus could spread.

ADVERTISEMENT

To contain the outbreak, authorities have gradually started to lock down much of the country of 1.3 billion people, sending stock markets to record lows. Parliament adjourned its session, and India's civil aviation authority banned all commercial flights within India starting Wednesday. International flights were kept from landing from Sunday until at least March 31.

At least 80 districts where cases of infection have been detected are under stringent lockdown. Police and health care were operating, but commercial establishments have closed except for essential services. Banks have asked their customers to switch to online transactions and reduced their office staff.

The government has fervently appealed for people to practice social distancing and wash their hands often.

But Modi's call for a 14-hour voluntary curfew on Sunday was the first nationwide effort at social isolation practices the World Health Organization believes are critical to slowing the outbreak to a level

that doesn't overwhelm health care systems. Lockdowns in other places have lasted at least two weeks, which is believed to be the maximum incubation period of the virus.

Streets across India's cities on Sunday were deserted as citizens stayed indoors heeding Modi's call. But key train stations were packed with thousands of migrant workers suddenly out of work and trying to head to their villages, risking carrying the infection to the nation's vast hinterland.

Late Sunday, train services were suspended until March 31 while crowds were still waiting to board. The suspension included major long-distance trains and public transit

in India's big cities, exempting only freight. The New Delhi Railway Station, usually teeming with activity, was empty on Monday.

India's national railway system totals 67,000 kilometers (42,000 miles) and carries more than 8 billion passengers a year.

India has at least 415 active cases of infection with the new coronavirus and seven deaths from COVID-19, the illness it causes.

Many were linked to foreign travel, but indigenous spread of the disease is considered inevitable in India, where tens of millions live in dense urban areas with irregular access to clean water.

Amnesty International says Thai military abuses conscripts

BANGKOK (AP)—The human rights group Amnesty International says many new conscripts in Thailand's military are physically, sexually and mentally abused, with some cases amounting to torture.

In a report issued Monday, the group says such treatment of conscripts undergoing basic training is widespread and long-standing and has included acts of rape.

The London-based group's research shows "that such maltreatment is not the exception but the rule, and deliberately hushed within the military," said Clare Algar, its senior director for research, advocacy and policy.

Military service is compulsory in Thailand.

Amnesty International says it found evidence that many conscripts "face violence, humiliation and sexu-

al assault, and that gay conscripts, in particular, may be targeted for abuse because of their sexual orientation and gender expression."

Asked to comment on the allegations, Thai army spokesman Winthai Suwaree said there were some cases in the past, but rights violations have been rare in recent years.

He said such abuses are not a systemic problem in the military and the allegations would be investigated.

"The Thai military is concerned about the well-being of all of our soldiers. The army needs to have personnel who serve to the utmost of their capacity, so we do not tolerate physical abuse in any form," he said.

The reports says new conscripts may be beaten by their commanders and forced to perform physical exercises far beyond their endurance, "which

— predictably — result in fainting or injury."

"They may on occasion be forced by commanders to jump into septic tanks, or to eat using their mouths only, 'like dogs,'" says the report, titled "We were just toys to them."

It says sexual abuses include forcing naked conscripts during bathing times "to hold each other's penises and stand or walk in a column or a circle" and making them masturbate in front of each other.

The group says it interviewed 24 former and currently serving conscripted soldiers, mostly from the Royal Thai Army, and three commanders and one former commander. It says the interviewees, who insisted on anonymity for fear of retribution, reported "three cases of rape involving forced sex and two other cases in which gay conscripts were coerced into providing 'sexual favors'

to commanders."

It says conscripts who either identified or were perceived as gay are often targeted for sexual abuse "including being forced to entertain and massage commanders, in situations that sometimes involve further sexual abuse."

The abuses often produce intense feelings of shame and humiliation and "constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and in some cases amount to torture," it says.

The report recommends that a commission of inquiry be formed to probe the alleged abuses. It also recommends the military adopt preventive measures "including issuing orders explicitly prohibiting (such abuses), ensuring that trainers are under constant supervision from higher-ranking commanders, and instituting night inspections by officers."

World

IN GLOBAL FIGHT VS. VIRUS

Over 1.5 billion told: Stay home

NEW YORK (AP)—With masks, ventilators and political goodwill in desperately short supply, more than one-fifth of the world's population was ordered or urged to stay in their homes Monday at the start of what could be a pivotal week in the battle to contain the coronavirus in the U.S. and Europe.

Partisan divisions stalled efforts to pass a colossal aid package in Congress, and stocks fell again on Wall Street even after the Federal Reserve said it will lend to small and large businesses and local governments to help them through the crisis.

Britain became the latest European country to order a near lockdown, imposing its most draconian peacetime restrictions in one of the world's largest economies. It came the same day the head of the World Health Organization warned that the outbreak was accelerating and called on countries to take strong, coordinated action.

"We are not helpless bystanders," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, noting that it took 67 days to reach 100,000 cases worldwide but just four days to go from 200,000 to 300,000. "We can change the trajectory of this pandemic."

The scramble to marshal public health and political



AP
A woman wears a scuba mask and a surgical mask as a precaution against the spread of the new coronavirus, while buying food in a popular market in Lima, Peru, Monday, March 23, 2020.

resources intensified in New York, where a statewide lockdown took effect amid worries the city of 8.4 million is becoming one of the world's biggest hot spots. More than 12,000 people have tested positive in the city and almost 100 have died.

The governor announced plans to convert a mammoth New York City convention center into a hospital with 1,000 beds. The mayor warned that the city's hospitals are just

10 days away from shortages in basic supplies.

"This is going to get much worse before it gets better. We are still in the relative calm before the storm," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

In Italy, the hardest-hit country, declines in both new cases and deaths for a second consecutive day provided a faint glimmer of hope, though it is too soon to say whether the crisis is leveling off.

Italian officials said Mon-

day that the virus had claimed just over 600 more lives, down from 793 two days earlier. All told, the outbreak has killed more than 6,000 Italians, the highest death toll of any country, and pushed the health system to the breaking point there and in Spain.

The risk to doctors, nurses

and others on the front lines has become plain: Italy has seen at least 18 doctors with coronavirus die. Spain reported that more than 3,900 health care workers have become infected, accounting for roughly 12% of the country's total cases.

British health workers

pleaded for more gear, saying they felt like "cannon fodder." In France, doctors scrounged masks from construction workers, factory floors, an architect.

"There's a wild race to get surgical masks," François Blanchecott, a biologist on the front lines of testing, told France Inter radio. "We're asking mayors' offices, industries, any enterprises that might have a store of masks."

The way U.S. officials respond to the severe pressure on hospitals—and people's willingness to keep their distance from others—will prove critical in coming days, public health experts said.

"Actions taken right now will have a huge impact on the course of this epidemic in the U.S.," said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington. "It's an important moment."

Italy records smaller increase in virus cases for 2nd day

ROME (AP)—Italy has recorded a smaller day-to-day increase in new coronavirus cases for the second straight day, officials said Monday while cautioning it was too soon to know if the worst is behind the country with the world's second-biggest caseload.

Data released by Italy's Civil Protection agency showed 4,789 new cases from a day earlier, nearly 700 fewer than the day-to-day increase of 5,560 new cases reported Sunday.

The number of deaths also did not rise by as much. There were just over 600 more virus-related registered in Italy on Monday compared to 651 on Sunday.

Italy has been anxious to see the day-to-day figures for new cases and deaths go down as it starts a third week under a nationwide lockdown and its health system struggles under the weight of the world's largest COVID-19 outbreak outside of China.

As of Monday, Italy had a total of 59,138 virus cases compared to China's 81,496, and the country is on pace to soon have twice as many deaths.

It was only Saturday when Italian authorities reported another set of grim one-day highs from the epidemic that first swept northern Italy starting last month: 793 more dead and 6,557 new cases.

Health authorities have cautioned that it will be a few more days before they will know if Italy is at the beginning of a positive trend.

"These are crucial days. Woe to whoever lets down the guard," Health Minister Roberto Speranza said of Monday's numbers. "Now, more than ever, the commitment of everyone is needed."

A top national health official, Silvio Brusaferro, resisted being too optimistic, saying that the improvements registered Monday were due to actions taken at the beginning of

the month, not in recent days.

"We need more consecutive results to confirm the trend, to be more certain that we are in a favorable situation," Brusaferro said.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. But for some older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Over 100,000 people have recovered, including nearly 60,000 in China and more than 7,000 in Italy.

A government decree that took effect March 10 prohibits people from leaving their homes except to go to work, to shop for food or other necessities, to exercise or walk dogs for brief periods, or to perform essential tasks like caring for an elderly relative. In the Lombardy region, where the outbreak began, there are even more stringent restrictions.

War-torn Syria braces for lockdown after first virus case

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP)—Syrians rushed to stock up on food and fuel Monday amid fears that authorities would resort to even stricter measures after reporting the first coronavirus infection in the country, where the health care system has been decimated by nearly a decade of civil war.

The arrival of the global pandemic in Syria as well as the Gaza Strip has raised concerns it could run rampant in some of the most vulnerable areas in the Middle East. War-torn Libya and Yemen, which have yet to report any cases, are also a source of concern.

The worst outbreak in the Middle East is unfolding in Iran, where authorities reported another 127 deaths on Monday, bringing the total number of fatalities to more than 1,800 amid more than 23,000 confirmed cases. The dead included the mother-in-law of the son of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the official IRNA news agency said.

Iran has faced widespread criticism for not imposing stricter quarantine measures

early on. It is also suffering under severe U.S. sanctions.

Lines formed outside grocery stores, banks and gas stations across the Syrian capital, Damascus, as people braced for wider closures. The government has already closed restaurants, cafes and other businesses, and has halted public transportation.

The city's Hamidiyeh souk, a network of covered markets running through the Old City, was deserted after the government ordered all shops closed on Sunday.

Authorities closed border crossings with Lebanon and Jordan, and Damascus International Airport was closed to commercial traffic after a final flight arrived from Moscow. State-run newspapers issued their last print edition and will only be available online.

Countries across the Middle East have already ramped up restrictions on daily life in an effort to contain the global pandemic. Many have sealed their borders and canceled flights.

The United Arab Emirates, home to the world's busiest

international airport, said it was suspending all passenger and transit flights for two weeks. Dubai's airport is a vital hub connecting Western nations with Asian countries and Australia.

Most people experience mild symptoms from the COVID-19 disease caused by the virus and recover within weeks. But it is highly contagious and causes severe illness in some patients, particularly the elderly and those with weakened immune systems. People can carry and spread the virus without showing any symptoms.

Around 350,000 people have been infected worldwide, and more than 15,000 have died. More than 100,000 people have recovered.

Syria has close ties to Iran, which is a key ally of the government in the civil war, and Shiite pilgrims frequently travel between the two countries. Syria's Health Ministry said a 20-year-old woman tested positive after arriving from another country, without elaborating.

Focus

By MICHAEL BIESECKER,
MIKE STOBBE and
MATTHEW PERRONE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Testing blunders crippled US response as coronavirus spread



In this Wednesday, March 11, 2020 file photo, a technician prepares COVID-19 coronavirus patient samples for testing at a laboratory in New York's Long Island. A series of missteps at the nation's top public health agency caused a critical shortage of reliable laboratory tests for the coronavirus, hobbling the federal response as the pandemic spread across the country like wildfire,

WASHINGTON (AP)—A series of missteps at the nation's top public health agency caused a critical shortage of reliable laboratory tests for the coronavirus, hobbling the federal response as the pandemic spread across the country like wildfire, an Associated Press review found.

President Donald Trump assured Americans early this month that the COVID-19 test developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is "perfect" and that "anyone who wants a test can get a test." But more than two months after the first U.S. case of the new disease was confirmed, many people still cannot get tested.

In the critical month of February, as the virus began taking root in the U.S. population, CDC data shows government labs processed 352 COVID-19 tests — an average of only a dozen per day.

"You cannot fight a fire blindfolded," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, said at a recent briefing. "We cannot stop this pandemic if we don't know who is infected."

The Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the CDC, has begun an internal review to assess its own mistakes. But outside observers and federal health officials have pointed to four primary issues that together hampered the national response — the early decision not to use the test adopted by the World Health Organization, flaws with the more complex test developed by the CDC, government guidelines restricting who could be tested and delays in engaging the private sector to ramp up testing capacity.

Combined with messaging from the White House minimizing the disease, that fueled a lackluster response that missed chances to slow the spread of the virus, they said.

"There were many, many opportunities not to end up where we are," Dr. Ashish K. Jha, the director of the Global Health Institute at Harvard, told the AP. "Basically, they took this as business as usual. ... And that's because the messaging from the White House was 'this is not a big deal, this is no worse than the flu.' So that message basically created no sense of urgency within the FDA or the CDC to fix it."

Even as private labs have been cleared by government regulators to process tens of thousands of additional tests in the last two weeks, experts

warn that the nation is still falling well short of enough testing capacity to keep ahead of the highly contagious virus. And it can often take a week just to get results back.

Trump last week rated his administration's response to the crisis as a perfect 10. However, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the CDC's system wasn't designed to test for and track a widespread outbreak, which he characterized as "a failing."

In interviews with the AP, two federal health officials with direct knowledge of the situation said CDC experts don't know why many of the agency's test kits failed to reliably detect the virus. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about what went wrong.

J. Stephen Morrison, a health policy expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, called the testing issues a "debacle," contributing to what he described as a confused and delayed federal response to the crisis.

As a result, he said, the CDC has now been marginal-

ized within the White House — a worrisome development.

"CDC has generally been regarded as the best in the game," Morrison said. "I don't think they anticipated the technical difficulty, or the speed with which the virus has been moving. The virus was racing out ahead of them."

FATEFUL DECISIONS

On New Year's Eve, Chinese scientists informed the World Health Organization about a cluster of 27 pneumonia cases of unknown cause in the industrial megalopolis of Wuhan that they linked to the city's wholesale fish market. Less than two weeks later, the Chinese had sequenced the virus' genetic makeup and shared it with the world.

Within days, German scientists had developed a test that could identify a unique part of the virus' DNA. The WHO quickly adopted the German test, publishing technical guidelines on Jan. 17 and working with private companies to produce testing kits.

As they have done with some past outbreaks, officials at the CDC headquarters in Atlanta decided to develop their own test, focusing on three gene targets distinct from

what the WHO used. Over the decades, the headquarters lab had built a track record of being among the first to develop tests for new diseases and quickly making them available for disease tracking.

The CDC published the technical details for its COVID-19 test on Jan. 28, 10 days after the WHO. By then, the virus had already been in the U.S. for at least two weeks.

The 35-year-old man who would become the first American to test positive had arrived in Seattle on Jan. 15, following a trip to Wuhan. After swabs from his nose and throat were flown to the CDC lab, federal officials announced the results Jan. 21.

In an interview on CNBC the following day, the president was asked about the risk to the nation.

"We have it totally under control," he said. "It's one person coming in from China. ... It's going to be just fine."

With limited capacity at the CDC lab in Atlanta, the agency placed strict criteria on who could be tested: people with fevers, coughing or difficulty breathing who had also visited Wuhan within the preceding two weeks or who had close contact with someone already confirmed or under investiga-

tion for having the virus.

On Jan. 30, the day WHO declared the outbreak a public health emergency, Trump again assured the American people that the virus was "very well under control."

Then he departed for a weekend at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, where he tweeted a photo of himself playing golf at his club in West Palm Beach.

"Getting a little exercise this morning!" the president wrote.

The following day, the U.S. declared its own emergency. Still, U.S. citizens returning from China who did not have a fever weren't tested for the virus but were encouraged to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

At that point, the CDC had confirmed just eight cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. The agency amended its testing criteria to include people with fevers who had traveled to China, rather than specifically just Wuhan.

FLAWED TEST KITS

Four days after the U.S. declared a state of emergency, only 178 patients had been tested and 82 others were listed as "pending," meaning they were awaiting final results, according to CDC data released

at the time.

To help increase the number of people being screened, the Food and Drug Administration issued emergency authorization for CDC-certified labs run by state health departments to begin processing swabs, and they were provided with kits that could test 250 patients.

As the first tests were processed at the state labs, technicians reported getting inconclusive results, which the CDC has said could be due to the test looking for signs of generic coronaviruses, of which there are many, rather than the specific virus that causes COVID-19.

Whatever the reason, by mid-February, only about a half-dozen state and local public health labs had reliable tests. But still, CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield continued to insist his agency had developed "a very accurate test."

"We found that, in some of the states, it didn't work," Redfield said earlier this month. "We figured out why. I don't consider that a fault. I consider that doing quality control. I consider that success."

The testing problems emerged just as the CDC broadened its criteria to include patients who were "severely ill" with COVID-19 symptoms "even if a known source of exposure has not been identified."

As more sick people sought to be tested, many states were forced to limit access because of the flawed CDC test. Accounts began to emerge through social media of people with all the symptoms of COVID-19 who either couldn't get tested or had test results delayed by days or even a week.

"I know of doctor friends of mine who have critically ill patients in the ICU, and we don't know if they have COVID or not because we can't get a test," Jha said last week.

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION

On Feb. 24, exasperated officials at the Association of Public Health Laboratories sent a letter to the FDA, basically asking permission for state labs to develop their own tests. Within days, the FDA reversed its previous position and said both public and private labs could conduct testing.

Trump, for his part, continued to insist the virus would die out on its own. "One day, it's like a miracle. It will disappear," he predicted Feb. 27.

By then, experts say, the opportunity to halt the relentless spread of the virus within the U.S. population had been lost.

On Feb. 29, only 472 pa-

See **CORONAVIRUS** on Page 18

Good Housekeeping

Fighting the coronavirus with disinfecting sprays and solutions: What works?

By NARA SCHOENBERG
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Brand-name disinfectants are flying off store shelves, snatched up by shoppers looking for effective weapons against the novel coronavirus.

But some disinfectants are better than others; some probably aren't necessary at all; and some can actually be harmful, spawning antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

We reviewed recommendations for the general population from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and talked to Erica Marie Hartmann, an environmental microbiologist at Northwestern University, about what

people can do to prevent virus transmission at home.

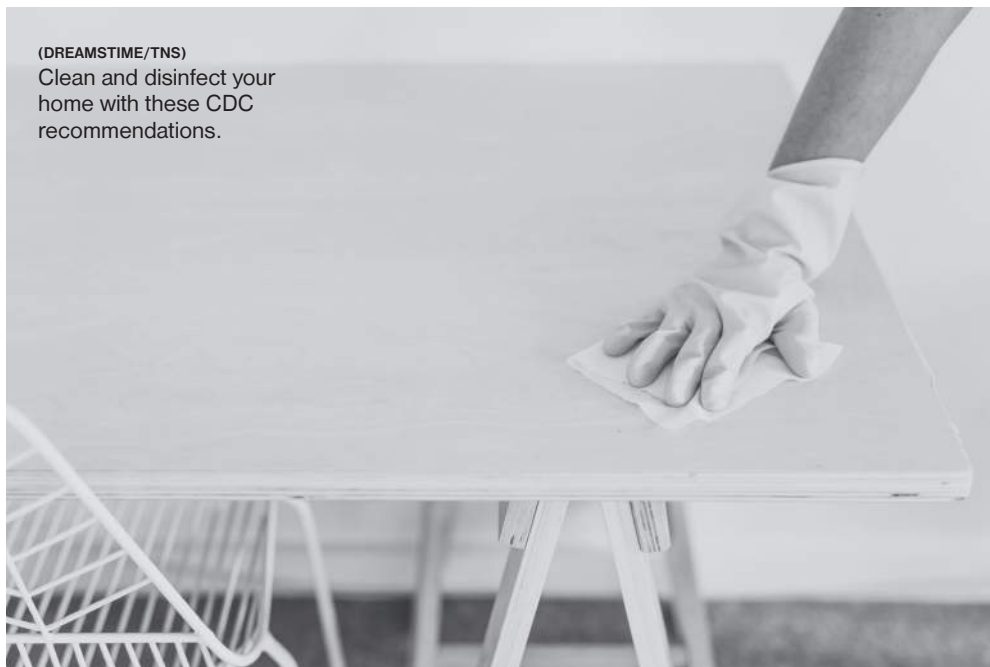
We also got intel on what to look for in a disinfectant, and how to help keep your family and your community as safe as possible.

The CDC says older people and those with severe, chronic medical conditions should consult with their health care providers about additional precautions.

Among the key points for the general population:

Start with soap. The major method of transmission is thought to be person-to-person, through droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus may also be spread when

(DREAMSTIME/TNS)
Clean and disinfect your home with these CDC recommendations.



common cleaning agent, are both highly reactive, so make sure you have plenty of ventilation while you are cleaning, Hartmann said. Improper use can cause chemical burns.

No vodka, please. Yes, it's "strong," but it's not an effective disinfectant, Hartmann said.

Rubbing alcohol works. The solution has to be 70% alcohol, according to the CDC. Follow the directions on the bottle.

There's a (CDC-approved) DIY option. The CDC offers this recipe for a DIY disinfectant: To make a bleach solution, mix 5 tablespoons (? cup) bleach per gallon of water, or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water. Remember to check the expiration date on your bleach, and to follow the manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. You should never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

Avoid antimicrobials. These sprays and solutions, which may be labeled as having long-acting bacteria fighting power, contribute to the growing problem of antibiotic resistance, in which bacteria evolve to survive the medications that once killed them, Hartmann said.

Don't spray and walk away. Spraying a bottle or can of Lysol may make you feel better emotionally, but if the primary ingredient isn't alcohol or bleach, and if you don't wipe down surfaces to fully disinfect, you won't get the desired effect, Hartmann said.

you touch an infected surface, and then your mouth, nose or eyes. Either way, good old-fashioned soap and water is essential, Hartmann said. The CDC recommends washing your hands often, and for 20 seconds at a time.

Continue with soap. The CDC recommends cleaning frequently touched household objects such as counter tops and doorknobs daily with household cleaners, then disinfecting.

Read labels. When buying disinfectants, look for products with alcohol or bleach listed as the first ingredient, Hartmann said.

Check the list. The CDC says most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective and provides a list of specific products that are thought to work.

Be careful. Bleach and hydrogen peroxide, another

You can try to make hand sanitizer from booze, but that doesn't mean you should



(DREAMSTIME/TNS)
Hand sanitizer is currently hard to find. But that doesn't mean you should try to make your own with booze.

By LUCAS KWAN PETERSON
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Hand sanitizer is currently difficult to find on drugstore shelves due to fears surrounding the coronavirus and COVID-19. It's out of stock online at CVS, and is marked up to borderline usurious prices on some websites.

The dearth of Purell and products like it has led some to attempt to make their own DIY hand sanitizer. And at least one enterprising person tried to use Tito's vodka instead of rubbing alcohol to make their own:

I made some hand sanitizer out of your vodka. The hand sanitizer doesn't taste bad either. Cheers to Tito's vodka. Keeping me germ-free and feeling good at the same time.

■ snottypotty (@titans-

fight) March 5, 2020

The tweet prompted Tito's to respond. "Per the CDC, hand sanitizer needs to contain at least 60% alcohol. Tito's Handmade Vodka is 40% alcohol," it wrote.

So what happens when you try to make your hand sanitizer with stuff you got from BevMo? Columnist Lucas Kwan Peterson sat down with science writer Amina Khan and a bottle of the strongest stuff available in the state of California: 151-proof rum.

The result? Even with a bottle that's over 150 proof, or 75% alcohol, a resulting hand sanitizer made with two parts liquor to one part aloe vera gel won't be strong enough to meet the 60% CDC threshold.

Just wash your hands instead.

CORONAVIRUS

From Page 17

tients had been tested nationwide, with just 22 cases confirmed, according to CDC data. Of those, nine cases were not related to travel but had spread person-to-person within the U.S.

By comparison, South Korea had its first confirmed case of COVID-19 on Jan. 20, the same day as the U.S. Officials there used a test that focused on the same gene targets as the WHO test, according to the website of a test manufacturer. They then quickly permitted private-sector labs to run the samples. As a result, a nation with less than one-sixth the population of the U.S. mobilized to test more than 20,000 people a day.

South Korea also instituted drive-thru centers, allowing quicker identification of those who were infected but might not be displaying symptoms, thus slowing the emergence of

new cases to a more manageable level.

Meanwhile, the rate of U.S. infections soared.

"The system is not really geared to what we need right now, what you are asking for," Fauci conceded during a congressional hearing earlier this month. "That is a failing. Let's admit it."

SHIFTING BLAME

As public outrage over the lack of available U.S. tests grew, the FDA announced it would allow private diagnostic lab companies to produce new tests without preauthorization from regulators.

Trump and HHS Secretary Alex Azar visited the CDC lab in Atlanta on March 6, praising the agency's performance and promising 4 million test kits would be available by the end of the following week.

That lofty number didn't match the ability of U.S. labs

to process tests, however. Private providers were just then ramping up, while CDC and state health labs processed about 25,200 COVID-19 tests in the following seven days, according to CDC data.

At the same news conference, Trump said he wanted infected passengers to remain on a cruise ship off the West Coast to keep the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. low.

"I like the numbers being where they are," Trump said, shortly before departing Atlanta for another weekend of golf in Florida. "I don't need to have the numbers double because of one ship that wasn't our fault."

Trump has also attempted to mislay blame for the testing troubles on the Obama administration. In 2018, Trump disbanded the White House directorate charged with preparing for and responding to

global pandemics.

"I don't take responsibility at all," Trump replied when asked about the testing shortfall in a March 13 briefing at the White House.

Morrison said Trump appears to see the virus as a political issue rather than a public health threat.

"You can imagine a White House that said, 'Do whatever it takes to test everybody for the virus,'" he said. "That wasn't the mentality. It was the opposite mentality, and ultimately the responsibility to protect the American people lies with the White House."

Trump and other officials have falsely said they declined to use the WHO test because it isn't reliable.

"Quality testing for our American people is paramount to us," Deborah Birk, who is coordinating the U.S. coronavirus response, said last week. "It doesn't help to put

out a test where 50% or 47% are false positives."

"It was a bad test," Trump chimed in.

Tarik Jašarević, a WHO spokesperson, told the AP last week that his agency had so far shipped 1.5 million testing kits manufactured in Germany to 120 countries around the globe, with no such problems emerging.

"The test has been validated in three external laboratories, adapted by WHO and manufactured in line with international quality standards," he said. "It has shown consistently good performance in laboratory and clinical use, and neither a significant number of false-positive nor false-negative results have been reported."

Over the past two weeks, U.S. testing capacity has surged, with private companies joining in. LabCorp began providing tests March 5, and Quest Diagnostics followed four days later. Tests

also are being conducted at individual hospitals and other centers.

With the increased testing has come a skyrocketing number of confirmed cases, zooming from 43 at the beginning of March to 33,404 by Monday.

Only in the last few days has the United States finally begun testing more people each day than far smaller South Korea, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Jha estimates the U.S. should be testing 100,000 to 150,000 people per day — figures he said should be obtainable given the number of high-quality diagnostic labs in the country.

"We certainly have the capacity. It's just we're not doing it," Jha said Thursday. "We are up to about 40,000 tests per day now — and so we are moving in the right direction. Still far from where we need to be, but moving."

Life & Style

NEW YORK (AP)—Harvey Weinstein tested positive for the coronavirus at a state prison in New York while serving a 23-year sentence for rape and sexual assault, the head of the state correctional officers union said Monday.

The 68-year-old former film producer, who was hospitalized with heart issues in recent weeks, was diagnosed and quarantined just days after being transferred to the state's maximum security Wende Correctional Facility near Buffalo.

Weinstein was previously locked up at New York City's notorious Rikers Island jail complex, which has had a spate of coronavirus cases.

The state prison system confirmed that two inmates at Wende have tested positive for COVID-19, but did not identify them because it said it can't comment on individual inmate medical records.

Michael Powers, president of the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association, said Weinstein was one of the

prisoners with the virus. Five officers and two supervisors at Wende were also placed in isolation because of possible exposure to the virus, he said.

The Niagara Gazette first reported Weinstein's diagnosis.

Weinstein's spokesman and defense lawyer said Monday they "will neither confirm nor deny whether Mr. Weinstein has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus," saying they wanted to protect his privacy.

Weinstein was sent to Wende last Wednesday, the day before the state prison

Harvey Weinstein positive for coronavirus in prison

system stopped accepting inmates from local jails in an effort to stymie the spread of coronavirus.

Weinstein, the Oscar-winning producer of "Shakespeare in Love," was convicted of raping an aspiring actress in 2013 and forcibly

performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant in 2006. His lawyers have said they'll appeal.

The New York City jail system that includes Rikers has reported at least 19 inmates and 12 staff members being diagnosed with coronavirus as of Saturday night.

Between his conviction and his move to state prison, Weinstein split time between a cell at Rikers and a room at Bellevue Hospital.

He left court in an ambulance after the guilty verdict

and detoured to Bellevue, complaining of chest pains and high blood pressure. He later had a stent inserted to unblock an artery. After his March 11 sentencing, he returned to the hospital with more chest pains.

In addition to heart issues, Weinstein's lawyers have said he is also dealing with the ramifications of unsuccessful back surgery stemming from a car crash last summer and a condition that requires shots in his eyes so he does not go blind.

Rosie O'Donnell's streaming Broadway show raises \$600K

From finding ways to help others cope to sheltering in place to canceling events, here's a look at some of the ways the entertainment industry is reacting to the spread of the coronavirus, which most people recover from but can cause severe illness in the elderly and those with preexisting medical conditions.

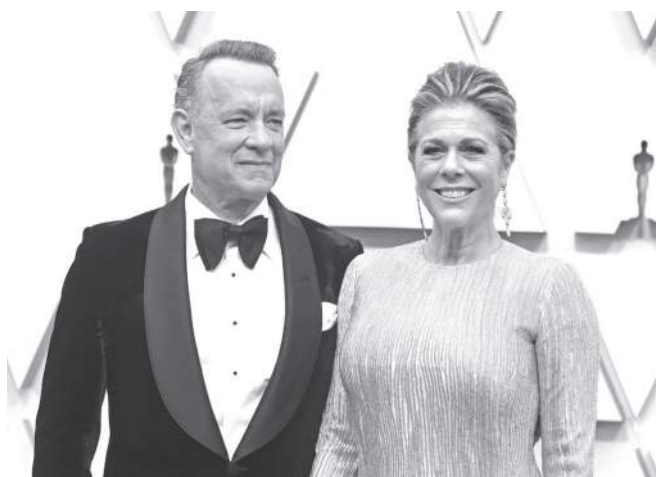
Rosie raises lots of cash

Rosie O'Donnell's streaming Broadway charity show raised over \$600,000 for virus victims.

Sunday's show featured Kristin Chenoweth singing "Taylor the Latte Boy," Gavin Creel singing "You Matter to Me," Darren Criss singing "Being Alive" and Gloria Estefan singing "There's Always Tomorrow."

The special was streamed live on Broadway.com and their YouTube channel. The money went to The Actors Fund to help those suffering from the coronavirus.

Other highlights included Neil Patrick Harris performing a magic act with his children, Patti LuPone perform-



In this Feb. 9, 2020 file photo, Tom Hanks, left, and Rita Wilson arrive at the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.

ing "A Hundred Years From Today" and Adrienne Warren live from her bathtub singing "Simply The Best."

Amazon makes kids' shows available free

Amazon is giving parents free streaming access to more than 40 children's shows, including "Pete the Cat" and "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" and select seasons of PBS Kids shows including "Arthur," "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood."

Interested users can access the free kids' titles with a valid Amazon account, which is free. The shows are available to the company's customers worldwide. Usually, the shows are behind the Prime Video paywall.

Others shows now free include "Jesse and Nelly," "Bug Diaries," "Costume Quest" and "The Snowy Day."

Rita Wilson shows naughty side

Actress and singer Rita Wil-

son showed off another side to her musical repertoire while riding out the virus stuck inside.

The performer, married to actor Tom Hanks, posted a video on Instagram over the weekend in which she is seen reading the sci-fi novel "Ender's Game." Then the classic Naughty by Nature 1992 hit "Hip Hop Hooray" begins playing and she raps along nonchalantly—and gamely.

"You drew a picture of my morning/But you couldn't make my day/I'm rockin' and you're yawning/But you never look my way," she rapped.

Wilson titled the video "Quarantine Stir Crazy." Hanks and Wilson are in self-isolation in Australia, where the actor was filming Baz Luhrmann's Elvis Presley biopic when the couple received the diagnosis that both have COVID-19.

Wilson's vocal skills delighted many on the social network: "The best video EVER!!!!" Kim Kardashian commented. "Yessssss R Greeky!" Jennifer Aniston chimed in.

Valeria Luiselli's 'Lost Children Archive' wins Folio Prize

LONDON (AP)—Mexican writer Valeria Luiselli's novel "Lost Children Archive" won the Rathbones Folio Prize for literature on Monday at a ceremony held online because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Luiselli beat finalists who included Zadie Smith and Ben Lerner to win the 30,000 pound (\$35,000) prize. Founded in 2013 to rival the prestigious Booker Prize, the Folio award is open to fiction, nonfiction and poetry published in Britain.

Luiselli's third novel and her first written in English, "Lost Children Archive" weaves together a family's American road-trip with the stories of migrant children along the Mexico-U.S. border.

Poet Paul Farley, who chaired the three-member judging panel, said the book was "a road trip, a documentary, a portrait of a family and of the American borderlands, and a journey into the idea of home and belonging."

A planned ceremony at the British Library in London was scrapped to conform with public health recommendations to reduce the number of people sickened with COVID-19. Instead, the announcement was streamed online and broadcast on BBC radio.

Speaking from her home in New York, Luiselli said she welcomed the prize as a sign that people were keeping faith in books, even in strange and worrying times.

Husband carried on an affair as wife cared for his mother

DEAR ABBY: My husband of 30-plus years cheated on me several years ago with one of his young private students. In our state, she would have been underage, but she was living in an adjacent state with different laws. I had just finished six months of nursing his mom to heaven. She had Alzheimer's, and he did very little to help.

We had one of the few fights in our marriage about his affair, but nothing was ever resolved. I suspect he's still in contact with her, but I can't prove it. He has never apologized for his behavior. Otherwise, he has been a good husband. He is sick himself now, and I don't feel right about leaving him. Any thoughts?

NOT RIGHT IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR NOT RIGHT: Under the circumstances, you are a nicer woman than he deserves. If you feel you should stay with him until death—or recovery—I respect you for it. However, if you are one of those caring individuals who expends so much time and energy that doing it could hurt your own health, I think you're entitled to spend as much time as you need taking care of YOURSELF.

DEAR ABBY: A friend blew me off after a 35-year friendship. I've no idea why—just a very hurtful, nasty message. Over

the years, we had many ups and downs, but we always made up. Now it has been almost two years since I heard from her.

Last week, for my birthday, she tried to contact me, but I have her blocked. She contacted my sister and said she wants to bury the hatchet. I said, "WHERE? IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD?" I haven't contacted her yet and am not sure I want to. She hurt me badly. I cried for so long. She was my best friend. I knew she wasn't perfect. She is the original Drama Queen, but we were still closer than most sisters.

I would at least like to know what made her blow us apart. Should I contact her? My pastor gave a sermon on forgive and forget, but I don't know if I can do either.

FOE OR FRIEND IN ILLINOIS

DEAR FOE OR FRIEND: Contact the woman and get your questions answered. After that, you can decide whether the estrangement is healthier for you than her drama.

As to your pastor's sermon, I believe that while people should forgive, they should never forget.

DEAR ABBY: We're a senior couple who have been together 20 years. My wife and I have a date night twice a week. I feel our physical intimacy melds our spirits and souls together. But lately my wife's new rule is, "Don't bother me while my TV programs are on!" When I told her I feel her programs are more

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

important to her than I am, she got upset. So did I. Nothing's been the same since. What's your take on this?

OLD GULF COAST LOVER

DEAR LOVER: My take is that you should reschedule your date nights to ones that don't conflict with your wife's favorite TV shows, or invest in a digital video recorder so your wife doesn't miss her programs and you don't miss a trick.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



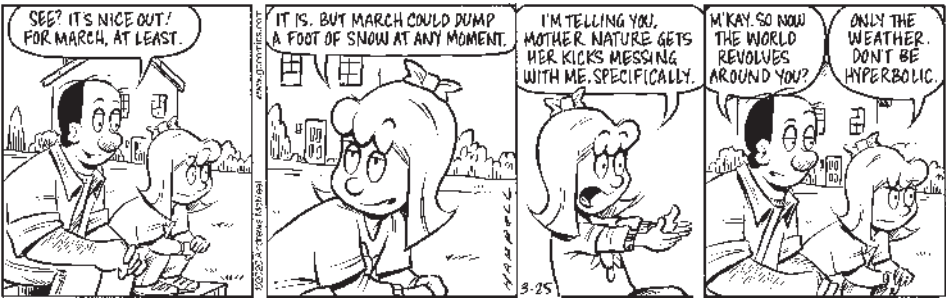
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

28 Word with 40 Observe 10 Pvt.'s

1 Ballpark fig. 41 Chaney of horror 12 Tether

4 Shaft of or films 14 "Sad to say ..."

7 Rwandan people 30 Acapulco gold 15 "The A-Team"

8 Relaxed 33 Grammy-winning lead 19 Devious

10 Clear wrap singer neighbor 20 Fragrant tree

11 Handgun 13 Feminist leader of Miami Sound Machine 21 Mayflower features

16 Lean- (sheds) 36 "A Streetcar Named Desire" 22 Gold bars

17 Job openings 37 Loosen 38 Not 8 — 26 Tire

18 Corn serving 39 Mideast gulf 9 Beneficiaries 28 French textile city

19 Thailand, once 20 Suffix with song or gab 29 New Haven collegian

21 Miserly Marner 23 "— Called Wanda" 25 Oodles 26 Despot 27 Pot-bellied pet

Solution time: 23 mins.

Yesterday's answer 3-25

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jenny Slate, 38; Sarah Jessica Parker, 55; Marcia Cross, 58; Elton John, 73.

Happy Birthday: Sensitive issues will surface this year, leaving you no choice but to address them and carry on with your life. Change is within reach, but it will require effort on your part if you want to have a say in the outcome. There has never been a greater need for prudence, accountability and moderation. Stick to a plan, and do your best. Your numbers are 4, 17, 21, 27, 32, 35, 49.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Refuse to let situations spin out of control. Size up what's going on, consider your options and proceed with caution. If you act in haste, you will make a costly mistake. Find a positive way to deal with any opposition you encounter. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Size up situations quickly, and avoid resistance. Consider what you can do to improve your life. A personal change will strengthen your relationships with others. Share an idea you have with someone who can help make your dream come true. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Offer to help others. Your response will lead to an encounter with someone who can shed light on a personal situation you face. Personal gains are possible if you use discipline, honesty and personal sacrifices. ****

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Don't wait; make a decision. It doesn't matter what others do or think; it's up to you to do what's best for yourself. Finish what you start

before you take on something new, and you will find it easier to move forward. **

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Drama will attract attention. Before you head down that path, consider what you want and how to go about getting it without looking bad. Strive for equality, making stable connections and being productive, and you'll project a positive image. *****

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Think twice before you get involved in someone's pursuit. Don't take a risk or donate to something that won't benefit you. Spend time with someone you love, and you'll find it easier to put your professional life in perspective. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Take care of your emotional needs. Spend time on self-improvement and honing your skills. Confidence will help you reach your goals, and knowing what you are capable of doing will help you move forward with the finesse required to be successful. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Turn your talent into cash. Modify your space so that it will help you reach your goal. Invest in yourself and what you have to offer. Your ability to set trends and adapt to whatever transpires will help you excel. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Look over your choices, and make a decision that will accommodate what you want to pursue. The changes that take place may not be welcome at first, but once you settle in and work with the adjustments made, you will succeed. *****

EUGENIA LAST THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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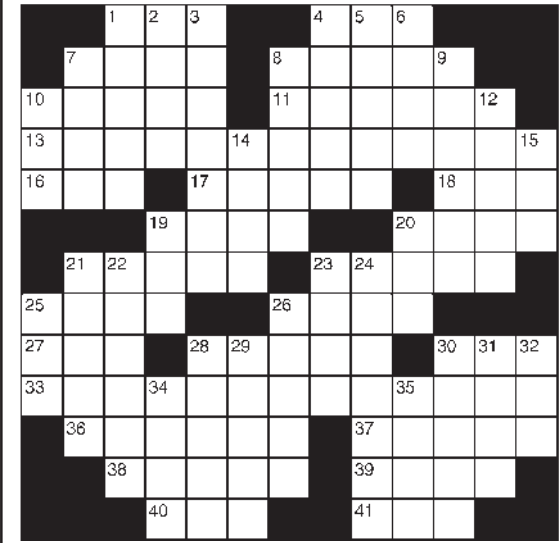
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Embrace change, and make it work. Use your intelligence and foresight to create a scenario that will put you in the best position. An insensitive remark from someone will get you back on track. Don't take offense; learn from the experience. **

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Personal aspects of your life will need an adjustment. Make your feelings and your suggestions clear to anyone who may be affected by your plans. Getting together with an old friend will impact your life. Your sensitivity will bring positive results. ****

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Look for a unique way to use your skills. The change or diversity you implement into your everyday routine will be gratifying. Share your feelings and reactions to the response respectfully, and you'll find a positive solution. ***

Birthday Baby: You are stylish, questioning and witty. You are demonstrative and unique.

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STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

SUDOKU Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

Difficulty Level ★★★ 3/25

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WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

JUDY (FILM) Solution: 14 letters

M I C K E Y O R V L O N D O N
L I F E O U D A N C S Y T
L L R J D L D F E I O I L E R
E O G E E K N U F R U A M N O
W R A S P C A S D O S P I D L
E N M S Y U L E L O L A A I L
S A B I D B R E R E T Z K S E
E N O E U Y A E T I I C A R Y
D D N R J H G N R L O L L D E
O Y T J C E O B L R L T E R L
H E O I W F G E T E E H W A R
R E M L L O N T B E C G I H I
Y N L E O N I B A R R Y N C H
R E D L I W A H S R A I O I S
Z R D M N B O W Y E N O O R S

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Andy, Barry, Bella, Britain, Buckley, Burt, Cordery, Dan, Deans, Delfont, Finn, Gambon, Garland, Gould, Jessie, Joey, Judy, Lewin, Liza, London, Lorna, Louis, Luft, Michael, Mickey, Minnelli, Renée, Rhodes, Richard, Rolas, Rooney, Rosalyn, Royce, Rufus, Rupert, Sewell, Shaw, Shirley, Sidney, Singer, Temple, Trolley, Wilder, Wittrock, Zellweger

Yesterday's Answer: Protective

Treasures 14, 15, 17, 18 and 21 through 39 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

All signs point to Tokyo Olympics being delayed

NEW YORK—IOC members, national Olympic committees and athletes were all racing toward the same conclusion Monday: The Tokyo Olympics are not going to take place this summer.

Craig Reedie, a longtime member of the International Olympic Committee, told The Associated Press that everyone can see where things are headed, with the coronavirus pandemic spreading and Olympic hopefuls around the world unable to train.

"In the balance of probabilities, the information known about conditions in Japan and the COVID-19's effect on the rest of world clearly indicates the likelihood of postponement," Reedie said. "The length of postponement is the major challenge for the IOC."

Earlier in the day, IOC member Dick Pound told USA Today that he had reached the same conclusion about the games, which are scheduled to start July 24. A tweet put out by the newspaper read: "The 2020 Summer Olympics Have Been Postponed Over Coronavirus Concerns."

The IOC said no decision had been made, and Reedie was quick to acknowledge that he was speaking only for himself and not because of any insight provided to him by IOC president Thomas Bach, who will guide the final decision. Pound did not return a message left by AP. Earlier in the day, after Pound's pronouncement, an IOC spokesman said, "It is the right of every IOC member to interpret the decision of the IOC (executive board) from Sunday."

Indeed, the interpretations and opinions are just that and haven't always been spot-on. Last month, Pound told AP that cancellation, not postponement, was the only real option if the Tokyo Games couldn't start on time.

But a lot has changed since then, and the rapid momentum of the "postpone" movement among athletes and nations seemed to diminish the likelihood that it will take all of four weeks for the IOC to reach a conclusion. That was the timeline the IOC's executive committee decided on Sunday when it announced it was putting together working groups to study the massive logistical issues involved in postponing the games.

Among those issues include the availability of venues in Japan, the disruption to the international sports calendar during whatever new date is chosen, the resetting of qualifying procedures, and insurance considerations; both the IOC and the Japanese organizing committee hold massive policies, the legalese of which will take time to unwind.



A man stands in front of a countdown display for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo, Monday, March 23, 2020. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe acknowledged that a postponement of the crown jewel of the sporting world could be unavoidable. Canada and Australia then added to the immense pressure that has been steadily mounting on organizers by suggesting that they wouldn't send athletes to Tokyo this summer.

After that IOC announcement, however, both Canada and Australia—whose senior Olympic official is IOC member John Coates, the leader of the Tokyo inspection team—sent word that they would not or could not send teams to Japan for an Olympics that start in July.

"I know this is heartbreaking for so many people—athletes, coaches, staff and fans—but this was absolutely the right call, and everyone should follow their lead," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said.

Other key delegations that have pushed for a postponement include World Athletics, the international federation for the centerpiece sport of the Olympics, along with Olympic committees in Brazil, Slovenia and Germany. USA Swimming and USA Track and Field, which combine to form about a third of the U.S. team, also want a new date.

Athletes also grew louder in their request for postponement. A track group called The Athletics Association joined another athlete group, Global Athlete, in pressing the IOC to act.

The track group is led by two-time Olympic champion Christian Taylor of the U.S., who said more than 4,000 track and field athletes responded to a survey, and 87% said their training had been adversely affected by the coronavirus.

Individual athletes continued to speak out as well.

"Although I am upset that the Olympics will not be happening this year, I agree that this is the best decision in order to keep the athletes and spectators healthy and to prevent the virus from spreading further," U.S. gymnast Mor-

gan Hurd said in a tweet, reacting to Pound's comments.

And while saying it's a done deal might be jumping the gun, it feels inevitable the announcement will come.

USOPC sees postponement as 'clear' path

Leaders of the U.S. Olympic team said "it's more clear than ever that the path toward postponement" of the Tokyo Games "is most promising"—a conclusion drawn from a survey in which nearly seven in 10 American Olympic hopefuls say they don't think the games will be fair if held in July.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee sent a sur-

vey over the weekend to more than 4,000 athletes for details on how the coronavirus pandemic has influenced their training and their feelings about the upcoming games; they received responses from 1,780.

Sixty-nine percent said they would feel comfortable competing in July if the World Health Organization—one of the groups consulting with the IOC—deemed it safe. But virtually that same number—68%—said they didn't think the Olympics would be fair under those circumstances.

The best explanation for that has been the massive disruption in training schedules, as

athletes prepare for qualifying events this spring and summer. Other concerns were over unfair qualifying standards and the undermining of worldwide drug-testing protocols.

With city and state governments closing gyms and asking people to stay in their homes, fewer than one in 10 of the athletes said they can continue to train without any impact. And 65% said that continuing to train and prepare will put their health at risk.

The USOPC has come under criticism for not advocating for a postponement, which is the position taken by its own sports organizations in swim-

ming, track and gymnastics, along with national committees in Canada, Australia, Brazil and Germany.

Part of the hesitation, CEO Sarah Hirshland told The Associated Press on Sunday, was to get a clearer picture from athletes about their training conditions and their feelings. Armed with the data, Hirshland and board chair Susanne Lyons put out their strongest statement to date.

"It's more clear than ever that the path toward postponement is the most promising, and we encourage the IOC to take all needed steps to ensure the Games can be conducted under safe and fair conditions for all competitors," they said in a statement.

Postponement of Ryder Cup backed

LONDON—English Ryder Cup veteran Paul Casey believes Europe's title defense in Wisconsin later this year should be postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The biennial contest between Europe and the United States is scheduled for Whistling Straits on the shores of Lake Michigan Sept. 25-27.

Organizers earlier this week described as "inaccurate" a British newspaper report that plans were being made to push back the event by 12 months, as happened in 2001 after the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

Casey cited that precedent when he was asked whether he would favor a delay of this year's clash while the world deals with the health crisis.

"Yes is the answer to that,"

he told the BBC. "I am never a fan of postponing stuff but it's been postponed before, so why can't it happen again?"

Like most other sports, the professional golf calendar has been heavily disrupted by the pandemic.

The first two major championships of the year, April's Masters and the PGA Championship in May, have already been postponed.

The U.S.-based PGA Tour, which runs the game's most popular circuit, has canceled all tournaments until mid-May at the earliest.

But for the suspension of the tour, Casey would have been playing for a third successive title at the Valspar Championship in Florida

this week.

"I'm obviously disappointed," the world No. 24 added. "I was looking forward to going for three in a row, but it's amazing how quickly things have changed."

"The situation is no longer about golf, it's about worrying about people's safety, people's health and the economic impact of that."

Meanwhile, Casey addressed other topics during a media conference call Friday, including his belief that any further extension to the unexpected break from competition could spark some uncomfortable ripple effects for Tour officials.

"I assume that if this goes any longer than eight weeks,

then I guess both tours have to start looking at eligibility issues," Casey said. "A guy can't lose his Tour card, or you can't penalize a guy for not playing the minimum number (of events) if he's not had the opportunity to play the minimum."

Casey noted common scenarios between players and sponsors requiring a minimum number of starts for endorsement deals, and he's one of several international players who maintain status on both the PGA Tour and European Tour by meeting minimum start requirements. But he's also acutely aware of the fact that status implications could be more significant for journeyman members whose standing beyond this year is in flux.

Teams can make major mistakes in NFL draft



NEW YORK—

In this weird coronavirus reality, the sport at center stage is the one that's not in season.

The NFL provided a distraction last week by staying the course with free agency. Although initially the decision seemed tone deaf, it actually gave millions of fans something to fixate on and discuss that didn't have life-or-death gravitas.

But the league's insistence to stick with the April 23-25 dates for the draft could be problematic, giving some teams an unfair advantage and leaving some lesser-known players out in the cold.

Over the weekend, speaking with multiple NFL general managers and player personnel directors from both conferences—each of whom was working from home—they commented on the condition of anonymity so they could be candid.

This is sports. These people aren't on the front lines saving lives the way doctors and nurses are. Hardships that general managers might encounter are mere inconveniences. But they could cause the NFL to reassess the scheduling of the draft, which has become a made-for-TV event.



In this April 25, 2019 file photo, Kyler Murray poses with a jersey after being selected by the Arizona Cardinals with the first pick of the draft last year in Nashville, Tenn.

"If everything goes the way it's going now, and virus could be peaking around the time of the draft, you could easily see a suspension of the draft," one GM said. "I have no inside information, but if we have areas of the country that look like what Northern Italy's go-

ing through, I don't think we'll be drafting ... But we have to prepare like we're drafting."

Tex Schramm, legendary GM of the Dallas Cowboys, once warned that the NFL cannot become a studio game. But putting the broadcast spectacle of the draft ahead of

the intended purpose—helping teams restock their talent supply—seems the epitome of a studio game.

The perspectives of the team executives varied slightly, but each said the inconvenience of working at home—without the opportunity to bring prospects

into the facility for a visit, in some cases without complete medical reports, and without the ability to bring scouts together for face-to-face discussions—makes the job significantly more challenging.

As one GM put it, it's more convincing if a scout is pounding the draft-room table on behalf of a prospect than pounding the kitchen table on a Zoom connection.

The NFL planned to hold the draft in Las Vegas for the first time. There was going to be a stage in front of the Bellagio hotel, and players would ride through the famous fountains in a boat when selected. That was scrubbed amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and the league won't be going to Las Vegas at all. As it stands, the NFL is planning a scaled-down version of the draft in a studio, using technology to check in with players and the various team headquarters.

Problem is, those headquarters aren't currently open. Virtually everyone is working from home, and certainly the executives from the three California teams—the Rams, Chargers and San Francisco 49ers.

As convincing as the NFL has been about pressing forward, there's a feeling among many that the current dates aren't set in stone.

The Rams and Chargers are in distinctly different positions. Whereas the Rams don't have their first selection until No. 52, the Chargers have the sixth pick and could well be choosing a quarterback. What if Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa is available, and the Char-

gers don't have the chance to have their doctors examine his surgically repaired hip? In that case, they would have to make a monumental, multimillion-dollar decision, one that could change the trajectory of the franchise for years to come, based on the recommendation of someone they don't employ.

A lot of players who have medical exams at the combine have to come back to Indianapolis for a follow-up exam. Now, those won't take place.

Under normal circumstances, a team can bring in 30 prospects for interviews before the draft. Those are now banned. That's a problem.

One GM said he's working at home, on his cell phone, with his kids running around and no ability to get into his team headquarters. He doesn't have the 30-foot-long draft board that takes up an entire wall of the facility, and joked you can't buy those on Amazon. He doesn't have multiple land lines at home, the kind that teams require during a draft. That would make a trade particularly tricky.

"In those situations, I'll have one of our scouts calling the player, one scout manning the phone that sends the pick in and is connected to New York the whole time," the GM said. "One guy is on the trade phone with the league. I might be on the phone with the other team. Plus you've got the countdown clock."

In short, that would be next to impossible for a home-bound GM.

"If my WiFi goes out," he said, "then I'm really in trouble."

Panthers add QB Walker, trade Allen to Redskins

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—The Panthers are making more changes at quarterback.

Carolina has agreed to terms on a two-year contract with former XFL quarterback P.J. Walker of the Houston Roughnecks, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity Monday because the moves have not been announced by the team since the players have yet to pass physicals.

The decision to add Walker prompted the Panthers to trade Kyle Allen to the Redskins, according to a person with knowledge of the move. The person spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity because that deal had not been announced. Allen started 12 games last season for the Panthers and went 5-7 as a starter with 23 turnovers and 17 touchdown passes.

The Panthers also announced Monday the previously reported signings of three unrestricted free agents—linebacker Tahir Whitehead from the Raiders, defensive end Stephen Weatherly from the Vikings and offensive lineman John

Miller from the Bengals.

The Panthers have made major changes to their QB room.

Teddy Bridgewater agreed to a three-year, \$63 million contract last week to replace Cam Newton, who was given permission by the team to seek a trade. If Newton isn't traded, the team is expected to release him and free up \$19 million under the salary cap.

So far the Panthers haven't officially announced they've signed Bridgewater—or released Newton, the 2015 MVP.

However, after Bridgewater posted on Twitter what appeared to be a photo of him signing a contract, Newton followed by posting on Instagram a video of himself working out late Monday night saying, "I'm hungry now. Hungrier. I'm unemployed. ... you want me to cry? I'm just gonna work."

With Allen gone and Newton on the way out, the only returning QB is Will Grier, a third-round pick who went 0-2 as a starter as a rookie.

Walker joined the Panthers on the first day that XFL players were allowed to sign with NFL teams.

Both Walker and Whitehead played at Temple under new Panthers coach Matt Rhule.

The 25-year-old Walker was one of the stars of the XFL and a leading MVP candidate, throwing for 1,338 yards with 15 touchdown passes and four interceptions while leading the Roughnecks to a 5-0 record before the league canceled its season because of the coronavirus outbreak.

While playing under Rhule at Temple, Walker threw for 10,668 yards in four seasons with 74 touchdowns and 44 interceptions. He has spent parts of the past three seasons on the Colts practice squad, but has never played a regular-season down in the NFL.

"Couldn't be happier for (at)XFLRoughnecks P.J. Walker," Roughnecks director of pro personnel Randy Mueller tweeted. "Love to see guys bet on themselves and be rewarded. Easy to root for good people."

Whitehead is a more proven player. He's played 125 games with 87 starts and has 633 tackles and five interceptions. He has started 63 games over the past four seasons with the Lions and Raiders. Whitehead had 108 tackles for the Raiders last year.

He could help mitigate the loss of linebacker Luke Kue-

chly, who retired earlier this offseason.

Seahawks acquire CB Dunbar

In Washington, the Seattle Seahawks have finally addressed one of their defensive needs. No, it had nothing to do Jadeveon Clowney or the pass rush.

Seattle landed some needed depth in the secondary by acquiring cornerback Quinton Dunbar from the Redskins for a fifth-round pick Monday, according to a person with knowledge of the move.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been announced. ESPN first reported the trade.

The move could end up being another trade steal for John Schneider and the Seahawks as they attempt to upgrade the secondary. Seattle had a need for cornerback depth and Dunbar should instantly jump into the competition as a potential starter. At 6-foot-2 with long arms, Dunbar fits the mold of the cornerbacks Seattle wants to have in its defensive system.

Cuban optimistic NBA games will return in May

DALLAS—Nobody knows what comes next for the NBA. Nobody. Because nobody knows how long this surge in COVID-19 cases—and, unfortunately, deaths—in the United States will go on, nor when it will end.

Count Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban in the optimistic camp—he thinks we could see games in May. Here is some of what he said to WFAA Monday morning.

“Hopefully by the middle of May, we’re starting to get back to normal and the NBA is playing games,” Cuban said. “Maybe not with fans, but we’re playing it because sports plays such an important role. You know, people want something to cheer for, people want something to rally around, people want something to be excited about...”

“I mean you know no one has perfect information right now, and so all decisions are tough. But, you know, if I had to guess based off the people I’ve talked to at the CDC and other places—I would say that the over under would be June 1, and I’m taking the under.”

That is more optimistic than sources I have spoken to around the league, where the conventional wisdom is to hope for games in June, potentially push-



In this March 4, 2020 file photo, Dallas Mavericks forwards Kristaps Porzingis (6) and Maxi Kleber (42) defend on a shot attempt by New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson (1) during the first half of an NBA game in Dallas.

ing the playoffs into August.

One thing that is becoming increasingly clear—the league wants to play and crown a champion this season. The

Pelicans’ David Griffin said the idea of canceling the season is not on anyone’s mind, and that is echoed by the sources I, and other reporters,

have spoken to.

Even if the league has to play into September, crowning a champion remains the top priority, Ramona Shelburne of ESPN reported on Outside the Lines.

That would mean pushing back the start of next season, and either shortening the season or adjusting the entire NBA schedule to a later start date and playing deeper into the summer. As Adam Silver said recently, everything is on the table with the NBA and what comes next.

It’s just nobody knows what that will be.

Meanwhile, as sports arena across the country sit empty, two teams sharing a billionaire owner are asking their more secure employees to help absorb the financial hit of the coronavirus pandemic.

Employees of the Philadelphia 76ers and New Jersey Devils making more than \$50,000 per year were informed Monday of temporary pay cuts of up to 20 percent, according to The New York Times’ Marc Stein. The cuts will run from April 15 to the end of June.

The Sixers and Devils are principally owned by Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment, which is helmed by Joshua Harris, a man worth \$3.7 billion according to Forbes.

Scott O’Neil, the CEO of Harris’ ownership group, confirmed the report to Stein.

Among the employees who will take the cut are O’Neil Sixers general manager Elton Brand, Devils president Jake Reynolds and Sixers president Chris Heck, per Stein.

Stein also reports that the teams’ aim with the move is to avoid layoffs, and that no health or 401K benefits have yet been reduced.

An important note is that teams’ players do not fall in

the same category as the employees experiencing pay cuts, but that doesn’t mean they will lose income soon.

The National Basketball Players Association has already warned players that their pay could be reduced in the event the rest of the NBA season is called off due to the coronavirus. That is thanks to a “Force Majeure” clause in the collective bargaining agreement that spells out a team’s obligations in emergency situations.

Gasol considering retirement

Pau Gasol gave *El País*, a daily newspaper based in Madrid, Spain, a wide-ranging interview. Gasol touched on his rehab and on how he’s coping with the coronavirus pandemic. In that interview, Gasol said he’s considering retirement from basketball.

Gasol has missed the entirety of the 2019-20 season while recovering from a navicular stress fracture in his left foot. He suffered the injury during the 2018-19 season, which he split with the San Antonio Spurs and Milwaukee Bucks.

After signing with the Portland Trail Blazers in the offseason, Gasol attempted to rehab to get back on the court this season. In November, Portland waived Gasol so that he could focus solely on rehabbing from the injury.

Gasol told *El País* “With this recovery process and the injury that I have been dealing with for more than a year, it’s undoubtedly inevitable to think about retirement. Also, taking into account that I will be 40 years old in a few months. So, it’s definitely on my mind.”

Gasol’s recovery time was expected to last anywhere from six to 12 months. He

passed the 12-month mark in mid-March.

The future Hall of Famer and Spanish legend said for now his focus is on things beyond retirement: “It’s something that will come one time, sooner or later. We hope that time hasn’t come yet. But I also take the opportunity to focus on the Gasol Foundation and other off-court projects. And also think of what my next professional stage may be, my next challenges. All this while I’m still recovering, trying to give myself a chance to keep playing. Now, the priority is to overcome this pandemic among all. Everything else is completely secondary.”

Meanwhile, former NBA head coach Stan Van Gundy made it clear he has no interest in coaching the New York Knicks.

Van Gundy gave several reasons for his lack of interest in the Knicks head coach opening. Chief among Van Gundy’s concerns, he said he considers the franchise to be dysfunctional. Van Gundy said “Everything I’ve seen in the last few years with that organization says that it’s extremely dysfunctional.”

PACIFIC

From Page 24

ceded with the Oceania National Olympic Committees’ annual general assembly. No new dates have been set for the two meetings.

“The ONOC meeting scheduled for mid-April has been postponed. The PGC were due to have a board meeting in Guam at that time and that too is now postponed. Travel for anything right now

is not possible,” said Minogue.

Although the PGC official did not mention the agenda for their postponed meeting, two major competitions—the 2021 Pacific Mini Games on Saipan and the 2023 Pacific Games in Solomon Islands—are expected to top the list.

Minogue met with the Sol2023 National Hosting Authority members in Honiara early this month to address the growing concerns about the Pacific Games at this time

of global crisis, according to a Solomon Islands’ online publication, *The Island Sun*.

Minogue, according to the report, admitted that pandemic will definitely slow down the preparation for the Pacific Games, but he believes the host islands will have enough time to get things done for the quadrennial event.

As for the 2021 Pacific Mini Games here, Minogue said “the PGC will, of course, offer the CNMI government every oppor-

tunity to focus on its own recovery efforts as the top priority.”

The Commonwealth has no reported COVID-19 case yet, but has felt the impact of the pandemic since last month, as the government focuses its efforts and resources on preventing the potential spread of the virus.

Minogue, who also had to postpone his return visit to Saipan next month, added that the PGC annual general assembly scheduled here on Sept. 11 and 12 is pending.

TOM-PA

From Page 24

Plus, there was always an incredible amount of food at Super Bowl viewing parties on Saipan and you know us journalists, the presence of food might as well be our Pied Piper.

Coach John Gruden and his merry band of pirates got the better of a disoriented Raiders side and took the bounty in a rout, 48-21. What proceeded for the Buccaneers were 17 years of nary a sniff of Super Bowl glory, dozen years of which were in non-playoff purgatory.

Brady, meanwhile, during those years was busy cementing his legendary career as the best ever signal-caller in NFL history.

Save for two Super Bowl

mishaps against the New York Giants (might as well change their name to Giant-killers) and the one hiccup against the Philadelphia Eagles (that still hurts), Brady always came out on top in football’s biggest stage.

It also helped that Lady Luck smiled his way. For every David Tyree helmet catch in 2008, there’s always a Malcolm Butler end-line interception in 2016. And who could forget Brady masterfully orchestrating the Patriots’ comeback victory against the Atlanta Falcons in 2017.

I watched that game at Bubba Gump and even bought myself a Patriots T-shirt across the street at I Love Saipan. The first half of that game made me throw up not from the food, but from the total shellacking the Falcons were

exacting on what appeared to be a tired and beaten New England team.

But Brady and the Pats came out a different team in the second half and the rest was history, as they only engineered the biggest comeback in Super Bowl history.

I also watched the 2019 Super Bowl, albeit on my trusty 10-year-old Mac when Brady and the Patriots beat the Los Angeles Rams in a yawner that turned out to be their last hurrah.

So why did Tom Brady packed up and left the Patriots? It could be he wanted to win elsewhere and finally settle the age-old debate on who made New England six-time Super Bowl champions, him or coach Bill Belichick.

Or Belichick may have

finally convinced Patriots owner Robert Kraft to finally move on from TB12, which was something he probably wanted to do when he drafted Jimmy Garoppolo in 2014.

Brady may have also gotten tired of coach Hoodie always whispering sweet nothings in his ear. It could be that the Buccaneers allowing him to reportedly have a say on personnel decisions also swayed him to leave the comfy confines of the Gillette Stadium. It helps that Florida also has no state tax. Or maybe just maybe, Gisele and the kids just want to leave frigid Massachusetts for the Sunshine State.

In the end, Brady simply might have 50 million reasons (nearly \$60 million if you include incentives) why he chose Tampa Bay.

TOVES

From Page 24

tional Team member debuted this season with a two-goal performance in their 3-1 win over MP United last Feb. 15 and made one apiece in their victory against Matansa (5-3) last Feb. 22 and losses to Kanoa (2-6 last Feb. 29) and MP United (2-4 last March 7).

Meanwhile, Toves’ teammate, Jaydee Jose, is still in the thick of the fight for the Golden Boot award, as the latter has gained six goals after five games. Jose collected three in their lopsided win over Matansa last March 7 and one each versus Matansa, MP United, and TanHoldings in the Feb. 15, 22, and 29 matches, respectively.

Behind Jose in third place

is TanHoldings’s Mark Joseph Roque (four goals), while Matansa’s Gabriel Arkoh, Kanoa’s Daniel Mar Pablo and Brian Lubao, and MP United’s Andrew Chung have three each. Three other MP United players—Devi Bachani, Richard Castro, and Jerick Quimzon—joined the list of players who has scored more than one goal this season, as they made two apiece.

In the team rankings, Kanoa, which is unbeaten in five games, has the most goals scored so far with 25. TanHoldings has 16, while MP United and Matansa have eight and seven, respectively.

The division is down to four playing weekends when the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association suspended the matches last week.



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to Tokyo
Olympics
being delayed

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Teams can
make major
mistakes in
NFL draft

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24 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2020

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Kanoa Football Club's Markus Toves and TanHoldings Football Club's Kohtaro Goto are the frontrunners in the Golden Boot race in the boys U16 division of the 2020 NMIFA Spring Youth League.



Toves and Goto have scored eight goals apiece after five matches in the three-round robin competition, which is suspended indefinitely due to the COVID-19 crisis. Toves managed to go on top of the leaderboard for the battle for the Golden Boot award after scoring three goals each in their 5-1 win over MP United Football Club last Feb. 29 and in their 9-0 demolition of Matansa Football Club last March 7. The Kanoa forward's two other goals were registered in their pair of victories over MP United (5-1 win last Feb. 22 and 2-1 triumph last March 14).

Goto forced a tie with Toves after getting three goals in



Goto



Toves

TanHoldings' last match before the league was halted. Goto's hat trick powered TanHoldings to a 4-1 victory

over Matansa last March 14. The CNMI Boys U15 Na-

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Pacific Games Council meeting postponed

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Pacific Games Council chief executive officer Andrew Mi-

nogue has confirmed the postponement of the PCG board meeting in Guam next month due to the COVID-19



pandemic. The event, which is set for April 12 and 13, would have coin-

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Pacific Games Council president Vidya Lakhan, right, and chief executive officer Andrew Minogue listen to the discussion about the 2021 Pacific Mini Games during their visit on Saipan last year.

Tom-pa Bay Buccaneers

MARKSMAN

By MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor



Growing up Mark wanted to play pro basketball. When his talent and height didn't measure up, he opted for a career in journalism instead.

So Tom Terrific is taking his talents to South Beach. Actually to be more precise some 280 miles north of Miami, but I just can't help myself with the LeBron reference.

Like The King at that time, Brady is leaving the only team he has ever played for in the New England Patriots, where he was drafted in the sixth round and 199th overall in the 2000 NFL Draft.

But unlike James, Brady is bringing not 1, not 2, not 3... but six Super Bowl rings in his move to Tampa Bay.

While many in the greater Boston area are crying me a river over the departure of their beloved sports icon, there suddenly has been a shortage of wagons across the country as Buccaneer fans are coming out of the woodworks.

Tampa Bay's chances of ending its 12-year playoff drought has increased many fold with the signing of Brady, while there are ques-

tion marks on coach Bill Belichick and the Patriots' ability to prosper without their former Golden Boy.

The Buccaneers' only Super Bowl win came in 2003 when their quarterback was Brad Johnson. Incidentally, Tampa Bay's moment in the sun was sandwiched between the 2002 and 2004 Super Bowl victories of you guessed it, the Pats and Brady in what turned out to be the first two of six times the GOAT of QBs and the GOAT of coaches hoisted the Vince Lombardi trophy.

In Super Bowl XXXVII, I actually rooted for the Buccaneers (does that qualify

me as a non-bandwagoner?) against the Oakland Raiders and hazily remember watching the Gruden Bowl at the Dai-Ichi Hotel (Now Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan), which was one of many venues that hosted Super Bowl parties that year.

I admit I was still a pigskin newbie at that time, but heck if these locals were crazy enough to get off from work on a Monday and scream at the top of their lungs and getting themselves wasted on booze while rooting for their favorite team, who am I to spoil the fun.

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